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AUTHOR Klassen, Cecil
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ABSTRACT

An approach based on sociolinguistic theory is reported that was devised to describe the way written language operates in the different domains that make up the everyday lives of a given group of people. The approach involves the practices that the people use to deal with written language, and the perceptions (uses, beliefs, attitudes) they have toward the written language they encounter from domain to domain. The focus of this study is on one group, low-education Hispanic adults in Toronto. It is assumed that daily language use realities in both the dominant and the minority language provide essential information for language policy and curriculum related decisions for adult basic education programs that cater to minority language groups. The findings suggest that low-education Hispanic adults do have uses for literacy in both Spanish and English and that those uses help them manage the various domains they encounter on a daily basis. The domain that particularly excludes them because of their lack of Spanish schooled literacy skills is the English-as-a-Second-Language classroom. Difficulty learning English and then acquiring training for credentialling leads to exclusion as well as from good employment situations regardless of work experience. Other domains such as bureaucracies, the home, transportation around the city, and shopping, are usually managed effectively by low-education Hispanics by a variety of strategies that operate primarily in Spanish. Contains approximately 75 references. (LB)

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LANGUAGE AND LITERACY LEARNING: THE ADULT IMMIGRANT'S ACCOUNT

(new printing with new pagination,1992)

by

Cecil Klassen

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The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

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for the Degree of Master of Arts
at the University of Toronto.

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ABSTRACT

Non-English-speaking adults in Toronto who cannot read and write well in their own languages have difficulty fitting into ESL programs and adult basic education programs. Their lack of mother-tongue literacy works against them in ESL programs (which are generally heavily print oriented even at the basic beginner levels), and their lack of English proficiency works against them in adult basic education programs (which are generally English-medium programs). The problem in this investigation, then, is the place of first and second languages in the provision of basic education opportunities to non-English-speaking, low-education adults.

For this investigation, I have devised an approach, based on sociolinguistic theory, which seeks to describe the way written language operates in the different domains which make up the everyday lives of a given group of people. The approach involves discovering 1) the practices that the people in a given group use to deal with written language in the various domains which make up their daily lives, as well as 2) the perceptions (uses, beliefs, and attitudes) they have toward the written language they encounter from domain to domain.

I focus on one minority group in particular--Hispanic adults--as one case among many to suggest the place that both mother-tongue and English written language take in the everyday lives of low-education, minority-language adults in Toronto. Because I focus on a minority-language situation, I identify the way in which both English literacy and mother-tongue literacy function in the lives of members of a minority-language group in Toronto. The reason for using this sociolinguistic approach stems from the assumption that everyday language-use realities in both the dominant language and the minority language provide essential information for language policy and curriculum related decisions for adult basic education programs which cater to minority-language groups.

My findings, which are limited and not entirely generalizable to other Hispanics, let alone to other minority-language groups, suggest that low-education Hispanic adults do indeed have uses for literacy in both Spanish and English here in Toronto, uses which help them manage the various domains they encounter on a daily basis. The domain which particularly excludes them because of their lack of Spanish schooled literacy skills is the ESL classroom. Difficulty both learning English and then acquiring training for credentialling leads to exclusion as well from good employment situations regardless of the years of work experience they bring with them. Other domains such as bureaucracies, the home, getting around the city, and shopping are usually managed effectively by low-education Hispanics by means of a variety of strategies which operate primarily in Spanish. Their perceptions of these strategies, however, reveal a sense of inadequacy and stigma which stems from two overlapping ideologies of literacy--the Canadian mainstream version, plus their own Latin American version.

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This thesis would not have been possible without the people who agreed to be interviewed for this study. They remain unnamed to preserve their anonymity, but they are the ones to whom I am primarily indebted for this work. I am grateful to them for their trust in me and the time they made available to describe their lives. I am also indebted to Evelyn Murialdo and Margarita Fernandez for getting me started in my search for informants. I would like to thank, as well, the people at Ontario Welcome House as well as the people at St. Peter's Immigrant Center, in particular Maria Delia Gonzalez, for the access they provided to their facilities and programs.

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CHAPTER 1--INTRODUCTION

This study has its origins in my interest in the broad issue of language policy for adult basic literacy[1] programs. I have applied this interest, however, to a context in which the issue of language policy is rarely raised. This context is Toronto. The learning needs of non-English-speaking minority groups in Toronto are taken for granted to involve only English. In many other locations around the world, language policy for adult basic education programs is seen to be a legitimate issue because education is being extended to rural and marginalized areas which often have their own, sometimes unwritten, dialects and languages as well as their own geographical and cultural identities and loyalties. The choice between the national language and the local languages and dialects in these outlying areas comes to have important cultural, political, economic, and pedagogical implications. In Toronto, however, it tends to be assumed that minority-language people who, for economic reasons or political necessity, have come to Canada have one "basic" learning need--English--because it is the standard language of the society into which they have come. Thus, their educational needs are not seen basically in terms of literacy, but rather in terms of English as a Second Language (ESL).

Literacy scholars, planners, and practitioners in English-speaking North America tend to assume that adults with basic literacy needs will already speak English. And well they should because studies indicate that by far the largest group of adults in North America with basic and functional literacy needs are speakers of English as a <u>first</u> language (e.g., see Kozol, 1985, p. 219). But the magnitude of the need in the English speaking population does not erase the fact that there are many minority-language adults with basic literacy needs--not just English as a second language needs. And yet when policy makers and educators talk about the education that immigrants require, English as a second language remains the primary concern. Thus, basic educational needs are treated primarily as English language needs. Even the Toronto School Board's 1985 report on adult literacy, which acknowledges a need for mother tongue literacy, mentions such literacy only as it is useful for learning

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[1]"Literacy" is an ambiguous term. It is used to refer to a wide range of competencies. In this study, I am primarily referring to a beginning level of reading, writing, and computation skills (Adult Basic Education) rather than to those competencies associated with more advanced levels of formal schooling.

English. It states that "increasing the immigrant learners' proficiency in their first languages" is an effective educational strategy, but the intended outcome of that strategy continues exclusively to be English competency (p. 5).

The reality of immigrants' lives in Toronto, however, contradicts the way in which such educational needs assessment for immigrants has been structured in at least two ways. First, minority-language adults who come to North America with little or no schooling have been found to have severe difficulties learning a second language in North American second language classrooms (see section 5.2.7). Those who have more success in second language learning programs tend to have had schooling in their own languages. The second reality minority-language adults find in Toronto is that, regardless of the taken for granted perspective that English is the basic necessity, many of the realities of their everyday lives occur in a multilingual fashion.

This study takes as its focus the ways in which written languages come to be used in everyday life. The phenomenon I investigate is perhaps best stated as a question:

> How does written language operate in the everyday lives of low-education, non-English-speaking adults in Toronto?

This is a complex question because it raises a variety of issues. It raises the issue of literacy in a print-oriented society. It also raises the problem of not speaking English in a society which uses English as a standard language. This adds a second language learning dimension to the literacy issue. There is yet another dimension to the phenomenon, however. English is not the only written language which is in question here. Other written languages also operate in the lives of non-English speaking minorities in Toronto.

This study focuses, then, on adults who can read and write little if any in their own native language, let alone in English, because they have had little previous opportunity to take advantage of schooling. This raises a fourth issue in the question above--living with little or no schooling in a society which in many ways is structured around the amount and kinds of schooling individuals have acquired. This problem of low education is tied into the literacy issue because low education often (although not always) is accompanied by low levels of literacy. But it also relates to the English as a second language issue raised above because low education has been found to be linked to problems with

learning English in a society which structures language learning opportunities almost exclusively around formal educational settings. One final level of complexity suggested by the question I posed above is the fact that the people I am speaking about are adults. Not only have they had little experience of formal educational settings, but they are at various stages in their lives in which culturally patterned roles, responsibilities, and choices emotionally, ideologically, and physically limit their access to, and ability to benefit from, formal educational situations.

The next question to ask is,

> Why is it important to study the ways in which written language operates in the everyday lives of low-education, non-English-speaking adults in Toronto?

The answer begins with the problem suggested above--these adults experience particular difficulty in an English-speaking, print- and school-oriented society. However, the importance of focusing specifically on ways in which written language operates in people's lives also has to do with adopting a specific approach to needs assessment. Many researchers in fields related to education have begun to move away from research approaches which operate in terms of large populations and have started to focus their attention on smaller, local settings in order to describe in detail the complexities and the dynamics of a local social context.

The historian Harvey Graff (1986) gives an overview of this new generation of social science research which, he says, is moving away from macroscopic, dependent/independent variable models to a microscopic model which focuses on the details and complexities of specific localities and contexts. In the case of literacy research, he argues, scholars have come to recognize the need to break away from a research methodology which simply links literacy to other factors, whether it is class, gender, or culture, or the larger themes of economic development, stratification, and education, and in its place provide "much sharper contextual grounding in clearly delineated localities" (p. 126). A new conceptualization of contexts, he concludes, "offers both new and better cases for study, opportunities for explanation, and approaches to literacy's variable historical meaning and contribution" (p. 127).

An approach of this kind which focuses on specific local contexts is especially important in cross-cultural cases, such as in minority-language situations, because such an approach attempts to move

away from evaluating minority group educational needs according to majority group norms, especially when such evaluation is framed in terms of deficiencies a minority group has in comparison to majority group standards. This new generation of educational research moves away from this deficiency approach by describing local social settings as systems in their own right, with complex dynamics and rules of their own.

This study follows such an approach in terms of the specific phenomenon of written language. The objective is to come to terms with some of the complexities of the way written language is used in the everyday lives of a specific minority-language group--low-education Hispano[2] adults. In a sense, then, this thesis is a case study of how written language operates in the everyday lives of one minority-language group in Toronto as an example of how planning and decision making for educational programs which aim at minority-language group adults should be grounded in language-use realities. Because written language in a multilingual context is my main interest, language policy for literacy programs becomes the important issue. It can be stated more specifically as follows:

> How can minority and majority languages best be taken into account in providing for the learning needs of low-education minority-language adults?

This study stems, then, not only from an identified need or problem, but also from the importance of following a specific approach to the problem--a language-use approach. This chapter is structured around developing these two sides of this study--the problem and the approach--but in reverse order. First I will trace, through what has become a substantial body of literature, the theory behind the approach. Then I will outline some of the dimensions of the problem itself--what available statistics and studies indicate about low-education, minority-language adults in North America. I will also begin to describe in some detail the specific group which became the focus of this study--low-education Hispano adults. I will conclude the chapter with a brief overview of the rest of the thesis, chapter by chapter.

THE PROBLEM IN THE LITERATURE

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[2]I will use the term Hispano throughout this thesis to refer to people who speak Spanish as their first language primarily because it is the term I frequently heard the people I interviewed use when they referred to themselves as a group.

As I mentioned above, the general problem I am concerned with is language choice for adult basic education programs. Thus, it is important to deal with the literature on literacy, specifically as it relates to adult basic education. Literacy, however, is an interdisciplinary issue. Scholars from a number of disciplines consider literacy to be a phenomenon relevant to their particular fields of inquiry. Thus, in the first half of this literature review, I will look at various academic and professional fields which have contributed to current literacy theory, particularly as it relates to adult basic literacy.

One discipline which has rarely addressed the issue of adult basic literacy but which is important to this discussion is the field of second language learning. A discussion of adult basic literacy for minority-language groups in North America must necessarily involve this field of second language learning both because the issue of language choice for literacy programs includes as one problem the issue of learning literacy in a second language, and also because, as I pointed out above, the learning needs of minority-language adults are framed in North America narrowly and almost exclusively in terms of second language learning needs. Because the field of second language learning does not fall under the interdisciplinary umbrella of adult basic literacy research, however, I have found it necessary to look at the second language learning literature separately. Thus, I will summarize some of the relevant work by second language learning theorists after discussing the literature on literacy.

Although second language learning theory and adult basic literacy theory rarely overlap, the two fields have a number of common theoretical strands. Current functions[3]-oriented approaches in both of these historically separate fields parallel each other sufficiently to allow a relatively integrated literacy and second language learning theoretical framework to emerge for the purposes of this study. The discipline which primarily provides the basis for this integration is sociolinguistics. As I will show below, however, sociolinguistics is not the only field to

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[3]{The word functions is not defined clearly in the literature. The term is associated with entire schools of thought and therefore cannot be defined to everyone's satisfaction in a sentence or two. What I mean by the term functions will become clear in the course of this literature review.}

use a functions-oriented approach. I will therefore begin this literature survey by tracing through a number of disciplines a functions-oriented approach to the study of literacy. The field of sociolinguistics, however, applies this perspective specifically to the phenomenon in question--language. This review, then, includes relevant studies from a number of disciplines, but it is sociolinguistic theory which emerges in the end as the most appropriate formulation of a functions- oriented approach for the purposes of this study.

I begin this survey of the problem as it is treated in the literature by summarizing some of the important literacy studies. I then summarize the relevant second language learning theory. The survey concludes with a summary of the main concepts which provide the theoretical basis for this study.

Academic Literature

Most literacy theorists and researchers comment on the problems which are implicit in discussions of literacy. Graff (1979), for example, observes, "Discussions of literacy are confused and ambiguous . . . . Vagueness pervades virtually all efforts to discern the meaning of literacy" (p. 3). Levine (1986) points to the complexity of the phenomenon itself. The controversies in literacy research, he writes, "reflect the fact that we are dealing with a complex amalgam of psychological, linguistic, and social processes layered one on top of another" (p. 22). This in part explains the interdisciplinary nature of literacy studies. But it also leads to lack of theoretical integration in discussions of literacy. Literacy's "sprawl across several disciplines," according to Levine, "results in identical issues being discussed in quite separate contexts with different vocabularies" (p. 6). Stubbs (1980) blames the weaknesses in the theory of literacy as well on contradictions within the same fields of inquiry. He uses the example of reading research and charges that there is "a confused relationship between partial theories and practice, a mixture of meticulous research and outright polemic, in a socially very sensitive area about which almost everyone holds strong views" (p. 10).

This theoretical confusion in literacy studies has prompted a number of scholars from a variety of disciplines to attempt to develop a coherent theoretical framework for the study of literacy by using a language-use or functions-oriented approach. The discussion which follows traces what several of these scholars suggest a coherent theory

of literacy must contain. It is broken down into two sections--the academic literature and the professional literature on literacy. The academic disciplines which have provided important studies of literacy from a language-use perspective are cognitive psychology, anthropology, history, and sociolinguistics.

Cognitive Psychology

The field of cognitive psychology has triggered one of the major debates in research related to literacy. It is important to understand, however, that this debate often tends to lack clarity in terms of what authors mean by the term "literacy." They usually appear to refer to highly schooled forms of literacy rather than to the kind of literacy talked about in discussions of adult basic education. In the end, however, much of this debate has direct relevance to the kind of literacy which appears in adult basic literacy programs because of the context specific and use-oriented definition of literacy which has emerged from it.

The debate has to do with hypotheses concerning the extent to which literacy produces qualitatively higher forms of cognitive development, not just a quantitative increase in the number of intellectual skills a person possesses. The research of Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole (1981a), however, has directly challenged these cognitive development hypotheses, and it is their work which contributes significantly to a language-use and functions-oriented approach to the study of literacy. It is important, however, to understand the debate itself to appreciate the significance of their findings.

This debate has many of its roots in the work of the psychologist Jerome Bruner, who emphasizes the social factors which influence thought and language. Bruner argues that psychological models based primarily on biological functions do not satisfactorily account for human perception, thought, speech, and action. He believes, according to David Olson (1980), that

> . . . what is missing [in biological models] is an account of, indeed a sensitivity to, the ways in which the conventions, artifacts, symbols, and ideologies of a culture influence the cognitive structures of individuals who make them up and of social relations . . . that mediate that influence (p.1)

Bruner (1980) himself writes,

> It seems . . . that human cultures do more than equip their members with skills and concepts and views about the world and life. They also have an effect--a differential one--on the ways in which their

members use mind. (emphasis in the original, p. 383)

Following this line of argument, researchers such as Olson have argued that literacy is more than a tool or skill used by humans to increase their capacities; it actually brings about a form of cognitive development which alters the kinds of thinking humans are able to engage in. Olson (1981) borrows Halliday's distinction between lower and higher functions of language, the lower being illocutionary (interpersonal, signalling functions which serve to maintain relations between participants), and the higher being locutionary (analytical and ideational functions serving to maintain logical relations within and between semantic units, pp. 236-38). Olson argues that written language promotes the higher, locutionary functions of language. This is reflected in his statement that "written language has the effect of distancing the speaker from the listener with the effect that the rhetorical or interpersonal functions may become somewhat secondary to the ideational functions of language" (p. 238). Consequently, according to Olson, part of what schooling must achieve in children is this "realignment of the interpersonal and the ideational functions of language" (p. 240). Cole and Griffen (1980) summarize this "cognitive effects of literacy" argument put forward by Olson and others as follows:

> Drawing on the classicist Erick Havelock, Olson argues that the introduction of a written language, especially in the form of extended arguments that he characterizes as the essayist technique, biases the way in which literate people think; it facilitates the use of definitions, logical principles, and causal reasoning. (p. 353)

They also summarize a similar argument put forward by the anthropologist Jack Goody:

> Goody's basic contention is that contrasts in mode of thought can be related to changes in the means of communication, particularly the advent of literacy. Writing provides people with new potential for thinking. (p. 351)

As I mentioned above, Scribner and Cole (1981a) challenged these "cognitive effects of literacy" hypotheses. They write that the "cognitive effects" propositions which dominate many discussions about literacy assume that "written language promotes abstract concepts, analytical reasoning, new ways of categorizing, a logical approach to language." But, taking issue with these assumptions, they observe,

> It is striking that the scholars who offer these claims for specific changes in psychological processes present no direct evidence that individuals in literate societies do, in fact, process information about the world differently from those in societies without

> literacy. They simply make assumptions about changed modes of thinking . . . . (p. 7)

Motivated by the challenge "to turn other social scientists' hypothetical mechanisms into demonstrated mechanisms" (p. 8), Scribner and Cole set out to join psychological analysis with cultural analysis by studying the Vai of northwestern Liberia, an African Muslim society. This society is characterized not only by both literate and non-literate adults, it also uses three varieties of written language--Qu'ranic Arabic, school-based English, and its own Vai writing system. In such an environment Scribner and Cole could separate literacy from non-literacy as well as schooling from literacy because the Vai script is learned and used apart from formal schooling systems. It was important for them to distinguish between schooling and literacy because previous research done in this same area had consistently demonstrated only the consequences of literacy learned in a schooled context. Previous studies had shown, for example, that "schooled children have generally out performed nonschooled children on cognitive tasks considered indicative of level of intellectual functioning" (p. 12).

The results of the study are complex. Scribner and Cole found, for example, that Vai literacy, which is learned outside of a school setting, does not produce the "general" cognitive effects which other scholars had been hypothesizing for those who can read and write. They found, however, that Vai literacy, like Arabic literacy, produces "several localized literacy-specific effects on certain task specific skills" (p. 132). Thus, they conclude:

> . . . there is no evidence in these data to support the construct of a general "literacy" phenomenon. Although many writers discuss literacy and its social and psychological implications as though literacy entails the same knowledge and skills whenever people read or write, our experimental outcomes support our social analysis in demonstrating that literacies are highly differentiated. Arabic and Vai script do not trade off for each other in predicting cognitive performance. (p. 132)

Nor, they found, do Arabic and Vai literacy (singly or in combination) "produce the range of cognitive effects that schooling does" (p. 132). Even schooling, they found, improved performance only on some tasks and not on others that "presumably qualify as tasks of the same type" (p. 244). They found, for example, that non-literates often did as well as literates "even on tasks closely related to script activities, such as reading and writing with pictures" (p. 251). Thus, they conclude,

> Our results are in direct conflict with persistent claims that "deep

> psychological differences" divide literate and non-literate populations . . . . On no task--logic, abstraction, memory, communication--did we find all non-literates performing at lower levels than all literates. (p. 251)

In fact, they found that living in a city proved to be a more significant factor than literacy "in shifting people away from reliance on functional modes of classification to use of taxonomic categories" (p. 252). The force of this research is not that literacy has no cognitive effects, but that those effects are localized, depending on the specific uses to which reading and writing are put in specific contexts. Scribner and Cole consequently opted for a practice-specific theory of literacy. They developed a functions-oriented theoretical framework based on the work of the Russian psychologist of thought and language, Lev S. Vygotsky, whose approach they describe as follows:

> [B]asic psychological processes (abstraction, generalization, inference) are universal and common to all humankind; but their functional organization will vary, depending on the nature of the symbol system available in different historical epochs and societies and the activities in which these symbol systems are used. Language is a universal symbol system . . . but other symbol systems are not universal and introduce culture-specific differences in the way higher processes are organized. (p.9)

Based on this culture-specific approach to cognitive development, Scribner and Cole developed an approach to literacy which involves noting the situations in which reading and writing are used and attempting to account for how those uses and situations reflect cultural purposes, patterns, and meanings. They argue for a view of literacy which sees the kinds of skills and cognitive processes involved in literacy practices as related to the social contexts and uses of a written language, as they explain in the following way:

> Instead of focusing exclusively on the technology of a writing system and its reputed consequences ("alphabetical literacy fosters abstraction," for example), we approach literacy as a set of socially organized practices which make use of a symbol system and a technology for producing and disseminating it. Literacy is not simply knowing how to read and write a particular script but applying this knowledge for specific purposes in specific contexts of use. (1981a, p. 236)

One of the implications of these findings made by Scribner and Cole is that the reading and writing practices that are learned and used in school contexts are skills and consequences specific to the school domain. Part of the problem with the research into cognitive consequences of literacy is that it has privileged the classroom mode of

writing as if such a use of written language were generalizable to all settings where reading and writing take place. Scribner and Cole (1981b) argue that

> . . . near-exclusive preoccupation with school-based writing . . . can lead to a serious underestimation of the cognitive skills involved in non-schooled, non-essay writing, and reciprocally to an overestimation of the intellectual skills that the essayist text "necessarily" entails. (p. 75)

What they claim is missing in the research, therefore,

> . . . is any detailed knowledge of the role and functions of writing outside of school, and the aspirations and values which sustain it . . . . [T]hese facts are central to an evaluation of the intellectual and social significance of writing. (p. 76)

The fact that literacy is not a generalized competency, but arises as different sets of culturally patterned reading and writing practices specific to different contexts, suggests that adult basic education should not be conceptualized either in terms of generalized sets of reading and writing skills, or as the preliminary stages of cognitive development in one's progress towards higher forms of thinking as provided by formal schooling. Instead, school literacy comes to be seen as only one more culturally patterned set of practices and skills. Similarily, in multilingual situations, literacies in the various languages involve language specific sets of reading and writing practices which come to serve separate roles. This "consequences of literacy" debate in the field of cognitive psychology, then, contributes in a significant way to the importance of investigating uses people make of reading and writing in the various languages which are used in their everyday lives.

Anthropology

The field of anthropology is where one would expect to find studies of literacy in a variety of different cultural settings. The ethnographic methodology and comparative emphases of anthropology lend themselves to such investigations. And there are a number of important ethnographic studies of literacy by anthropologists. Jack Goody's often quoted theoretical works on literacy, however, do not fit into this category because they are not ethnographic accounts. His work nevertheless is important in literacy studies and I will refer to this work in chapters 5 and 6.

In addition to Scribner and Cole's study, which branched into the field of anthropology (with Goody's assistance), Shirley Brice Heath's

(1983) ethnographic research provides one of the landmark studies of the everyday uses people make of reading and writing in specific local settings. One of the more important aspects of her study is her finding that even neighbouring English-speaking communities can use oral and written language in significantly different ways.

She contrasted the uses people make of language in three neighboring English-speaking communities in the foothills of the Appalachian mountains. One community was composed of what she called the townspeople--schooled whites and schooled blacks who work primarily in white-collar jobs. These people, she argues, are familiar with the ways in which language is used in many of the important institutions of society. Mill workers lived in the other two communities, Trackton and Roadville, one containing working class blacks and the other containing working class whites. She describes how these different ways of using language intersect as follows:

> The Trackton blacks and Roadville whites described in this book have different ways of using language in worship, for social control, and in asserting their sense of identity. They do so, however, because they have had different historical forces shaping these ways. Only in the past few decades have blacks and whites of working-class communities come together in institutions of work, commerce, politics, and schooling where each has met yet a third set of ways of using language to get things done. It is the townspeople--blacks and whites of the mainstream middle class--who have the most familiarity with the communicative habits and preferences of these public institutions. (p. 10)

Heath makes three general observations about how written and spoken language come to be used in these communities (p. 344). First, she says, patterns of language use parallel other cultural practices in a given community. This makes it necessary to describe the cultural patterns and social realities within which a group lives. Secondly, the way in which people learn the uses of language, including uses of reading and writing, is part of a complex language socialization process specific to a given community. The implication of this for learning theory, as Heath points out in another work, is that the extent to which people will learn given uses for reading and writing "depends greatly on the role literacy plays in their families, communities, and jobs" (1980, p. 130).

The third observation Heath makes about how language comes to be used in a community is that oral and written language interact and influence each other in the ways they are used. For example, she observed that people in one community, Trackton, often treated reading as a public,

shared event to talk about and add to (such as letters or newspapers in the home or written prayers and hymns at church) whereas the people of Roadville treated written text as complete and largely unalterable, much as they treated religious literature in their religious practices. Thus, Heath points out that not only do the uses of reading and writing vary between communities according to separate traditions, but the way the uses interact with the uses of oral language also vary. She summarizes her argument as follows:

> This book argues that in Roadville and Trackton the different ways children learned to use language were dependent on the ways in which each community structured their families, defined the roles that community members could assume, and played out their concepts of childhood that guided child socialization. In addition, for each group, the place of religious activities was inextricably linked to the valuation of language in determining an individual's access to goods, services, and estimations of position and power in the community. In communities throughout the world, these and other features of the cultural milieu affect the ways in which children learn to use language. The place of language in the cultural life of each social group is interdependent with the habits and values of behaving shared among members of that group. (1983, p. 11)

The influence of religious uses for language on the ways in which language was used in other domains of life suggests the importance of including the cultural nature of literacy practices in theories of literacy.

In sum, then, Heath, much like Scribner and Cole, employs a research approach which focuses on everyday language uses, and on the contexts of those uses in terms of specific groups of people. And she notes the lack of this kind of study for North American contexts:

> At the present time . . . there is almost no systematic description of the functions of writing in the society as a whole or in special groups and subcultures which differ among themselves and from school culture in their uses of writing and their attitudes toward it. (1981, p. 44)

Brian Street (1984) provides another ethnographic study of literacy. His study centers on the way literacy operates in a small town in a mountainous, fruit growing community in Iran. Street depends on the work of Scribner and Cole, Heath, and others to flesh out his approach. In addition, Street emphasizes what he describes as the ideological nature of the uses and roles people attach to reading and writing skills. This concept of the ideological component of literacy surfaces frequently in this thesis.

Street develops his "ideological" model for literacy in contrast to

what he calls the "autonomous" model represented by earlier literacy theorists. Much like Scribner and Cole, he challenges theories which view literacy as a neutral, context free technology which produces the same positive intellectual, economic, and social effects in any context. He argues instead that,

> . . . what the particular practices and concepts of reading and writing are for a given society depends upon the context; that they are already embedded in an ideology and cannot be isolated or treated as "neutral" or merely "technical". . .. The skills and concepts that accompany literacy acquisition, in whatever form, do not stem in some automatic way from the inherent qualities of literacy . . . but are aspects of a specific ideology. (p. 1)

Street provides evidence from a wide range of studies to demonstrate the validity of his ideological model for literacy. He refers, for example, to the ways in which people in medieval England (as described by Clanchy, 1979) trusted a community member's word more than what was written on a document (written documentation was considered too susceptible to forgery), and to Heath's findings about the different ways in which youths from neighbouring communities related literacy to "truth" (i.e., the value of fiction versus what is "real"). He concludes that "we find ourselves having to give an account of fundamental moral and conceptual principles in order to understand the particular form that literacy takes" in a given community (p. 123).

Street then demonstrates that an ideological model for literacy must be used to properly account for the different literacy practices he observed in the Iranian village. These literacy practices, and the ways in which they are learned, do not reflect the acquisition of merely technical skills but of a form of socialization into specific ideological systems which give roles to those who use the practices, and which provide the rationales for how and why the practices are used. Many youths, for example, learn Qu'ranic Arabic reading and writing skills for religious reasons. A small number of ambitious village men adapted certain features of this religious literacy into a kind of commercial, record-keeping literacy, but they do not confuse this adaptation with Qu'ranic religious literacy. Community members also do not attach the respect to this commercial literacy that they do to the learning of the Qu'ranic religious literacy. The literacy learned by state-educated youths is different yet again from the two uses of the Qu'ranic literacy. State school literacy involves a separate set of social practices because it is not related to a religious context and is understood to be part of

a preparation for employment in the state bureaucracy. Consequently, it relates to a separate sphere from both the Qu'ranic and commercial literacies, and is embedded in a less religious ideological framework.

The three kinds of literacy are differentiated, then, more according to the socially constructed understandings, values, and roles which accompany each form of literacy than according to what technical or intellectual skills they require (pp. 177-78). What Street emphasizes, therefore, in his discussion of the functions of literacy in specific contexts, is the analysis of the ideological dimensions which help structure who uses reading and writing, for what purposes, and what values are attached to those roles and purposes.

I will be referring throughout this thesis to other cross-cultural studies of literacy to provide additional examples for comparison. These other studies, however, do not provide the extended elaboration of a functions-oriented literacy theory such as is found in Heath's and Street's work. These other studies will therefore not be mentioned at this point. Heath's and Street's contributions can be summarized as follows: Heath demonstrates that uses of reading, writing, and speaking vary between different groups of people in ways which parallel other cultural practices in a given community. This suggests that generalized or universal definitions for literacy do not adequately account for literacy as used in everyday life. Street emphasizes that literacy and literacy learning relate to the roles, practices, and values--all of which together form what he calls an ideology--shared by members of a community.

History of Literacy

The historian of literacy, Harvey Graff (1979), has also employed a use-oriented and context-specific perspective in his historical studies of literacy. He extends the emphasis on describing specific social contexts, as used by Scribner and Cole, Heath, and Street, to specific settings in other historical periods. Thus, he observes that scholars involved in historical studies of literacy have come to realize that "the contexts of literacy, the needs for and uses of it, are far more interesting and important than the raw series of data on changes over time" (p. 16).

Much like Street, Graff discusses literacy in terms of the prevailing ideology of literacy which operates in a society. In his book The Literacy Myth (1979), Graff describes how a specific ideology of literacy

was shared by members of all classes of society in mid-nineteenth-century urban Ontario. He demonstrates how schooling was at once highly valued by people in all segments of society, particularly as a mark of good character and accomplishment, but also not needed by many individuals in most of their everyday activities.

Graff argues, therefore, that an imperfect literacy was sufficient for many needs of the general population, and that the purposes for which many people used what literacy they had (reading cheap popular literature for diversion, for example) often contradicted the high estimation people placed on literacy's cultural and moral value. He also shows how race, gender, and class had a stronger influence on what opportunities were available to individuals than did schooling, regardless of the power people attributed to literacy, because many women, blacks, and Irish Catholics who achieved literacy through schooling received little personal economic or social benefit from any schooling they had had. Thus, Graff writes that "social realities contradicted the promoted promises of literacy" (p. 321).

Graff concludes that the limited ways in which most people actually used reading and writing, as well as the fact that social and economic benefits did not accompany schooling for socially subordinated individuals, directly contradicted the high value everyone attached to schooling. These contradictions can be explained, he argues, in terms of the ideology of literacy which contributed to the effective maintenance of existing social relations. Thus, Graff argues that the impact of literacy in people's everyday lives in mid-nineteenth-century Ontario had more to do with its symbolic or ideological influence than in the limited instrumental benefits which it brought to those who could read and write. Consequently, Graff maintains that

> . . . on the larger, societal level, literacy even if imperfect was especially important. This related directly to the moral bases of literacy and to the reestablishment and maintenance of social and cultural hegemony. (p. 321)

Thus, like Street, Graff emphasizes the importance of including people's beliefs about literacy in theories of what literacy is and how it operates in specific social contexts. The primary implication is that literacy cannot be separated from the cultural meanings which come to determine how it operates. A kind of relativism is therefore needed, according to Graff, in definitions of literacy because "literacy's role changes with time, place, and circumstances" (p. 3).

Sociolinguistics and Literacy

I implied earlier that discussions of literacy tend to often be more multidisciplinary than interdisciplinary because of a lack of theoretical integration between the various fields of inquiry which take an interest in the phenomenon of literacy. This survey of academic works on literacy has, up to this point, demonstrated the importance that scholars in a number of distinct fields are giving to the description of how written language operates in specific social settings. Researchers interested in literacy are beginning to use this common emphasis to develop a more integrated, interdisciplinary theory of literacy. They are attempting to provide clearer and more descriptive definitions that reflect what literacy is and how it operates in everyday language-use situations. In doing so, literacy discussions are providing what amounts to a sociolinguistic theory of literacy.

The sociolinguistic studies which I describe in this section are primarily theoretical works which relate sociolinguistic theory to the study of literacy. Before I turn to the works themselves, however, I will briefly outline the sociolinguistic concepts which are central to this discussion. This will make clear how this sociolinguistic perspective parallels the approaches of Scribner and Cole, Heath, and Street described above.

The sociolinguistic concepts which are central to the approach I take in this study are an emphasis on social contexts, and an emphasis on language functions. These two concepts can be traced in particular to the work of two linguists, Dell Hymes and M.A.K. Halliday. Sandra Savignon (1983) provides a good summary of the contributions which these two scholars have made to sociolinguistics. Halliday's contributions, according to Savignon, are the two interrelated concepts of "context of situation" and "functions of language." Halliday borrowed the term "context of situation" from the linguist Firth and the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski to refer to the many physical, social, and psychological features of a given situation which help explain a particular communicative act. Halliday's concept of function, according to Savignon, has to do with "the use to which language is put, the purpose of an utterance rather than the particular grammatical form an utterance takes" (p. 13).

What is more important, perhaps, than these two concepts by themselves, however, is the fact that they are closely connected;

function cannot be separated from context. This is perhaps the central argument of my investigation. Savignon summarizes this issue as follows: "The function of a particular utterance can be understood only when the utterance is placed in its context of situation" (p. 14).

One of Hymes' important contributions to this sociolinguistic perspective is his notion of "communicative competence," which is competence that is based on the way language operates in real social contexts. Hymes coined the term in reaction to Chomsky's notion of "linguistic competence," and it is important to understand the difference between these two forms of competence. Sandra Savignon (1983) explains the difference as follows:

> Hymes looks at the real speaker-listener in that feature of language of which Chomsky gives no account: social interaction. It is precisely on language in actual performance that Hymes focuses. Much of what, for Chomsky, is extraneous to a theory of linguistic competence and relegated to a theory of performance, or language use, is, for Hymes, an integral part of a theory of communicative competence. (p. 11)

And from this approach comes Hymes' well-known maxim: "There are rules of use, without which rules of syntax are useless" (1980, p. 27). Hymes lists four essential parameters for describing such rules of use in communicative behaviour, extending from the general grammatical possibility of an utterance, to its feasibility and appropriateness in more specific situations, and finally to whether or not it is actually ever performed, and if so, what its doing entails (1971, p. 12).

Like Halliday, Hymes also argues that language functions should be central to a description of language. He distinguishes between the forms or structures of language, and the functions of language, claiming that forms are the secondary and merely instrumental features of the fundamental core--functions. Thus, an adequate description of language must include an account of what the various levels of language form (syntax, phonology, lexicon, morphology) "are being used for, and to what effect" (1980, p. 113).

There are two interrelated components to Hymes' concept of language functions: 1) the language practices people can be observed to actually use, and 2) the roles, significance, or meanings ascribed to those practices at various levels within a society. The second component is particularly important in this sociolinguistic approach to language because the way in which people come to attach importance, value, or significance to the ways in which they use language to a large extent

determines the language practices they engage in. Hymes explains this component of language functions in terms of the socialization a child undergoes in learning a language:

> In short, a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others. This competence, moreover, is integral with attitudes, values, and motivations concerning language, its features and uses, and integral with competence for, and attitudes toward, the interrelation of language with the other code of communicative conduct. (1979, p. 15)

Muriel Saville-Troike (1982) builds on this sociolinguistic base to develop an ethnographic methodology for describing communication. What makes her work appropriate to this study is the way in which she applies Hymes' concepts to multilingual situations. A concept which she discusses which is important to this study is speech communities. Speech communities, she observes, when described in terms of how languages are used, cannot simply be categorized according to different native languages, one language per community. A number of different languages may be used in the same speech community to serve separate functions (p. 48).

In addition, she points out, an individual may participate "in a number of discrete and overlapping speech communities" without necessarily belonging to each of those communities and without necessarily speaking the languages used in those communities (p. 21). Even without fluency in a given language, one may still effectively participate in a community which bases much of its everyday existence on that language. Saville-Troike points out, therefore, that mere participation in a speech community is not the same as being a member of it (p. 18). What membership involves, even in communities which regularly use more than one language, includes common understandings of language identity and values, and a common understanding of community-specific language uses and roles (p. 169). Consequently, although in a very general sense some purposes and functions of language may be universal, Saville-Troike emphasizes that different communities tend to have different configurations or "hierarchies" of purposes for which languages are used (pp. 48, 82).

There are a number of authors who relate this sociolinguistic emphasis on social contexts and language functions specifically to literacy. John Szwed (1981) provides one of the clearer statements of how a functional approach applies to literacy. He states that if we are to go back to

basics to change the high rate of school failure, especially among ethnic minorities, we should go back to the basic "basic", which he defines as follows:

> That is, the roles these abilities play in social life; the varieties of reading and writing available for choice; the contexts for their performance; and the manner in which they are interpreted and tested, not by experts, but by ordinary people in ordinary activities. In doing this, I am following a recent trend in language studies, one which recognizes that it is not enough to know what a language looks like and to be able to describe and measure it, but one must also know what it means to its users and how it is used by them. (p. 14)

Szwed is not referring only to non-English-speaking minority groups, but also to any group whose ways of using language do not match schooled language practices. "There is in this sort of study," he says, "a need to keep literacy within the logic of the everyday lives of people" (p. 20) and a "need to look at reading and writing as activities having consequences in (and being affected by) family life, work patterns, economic conditions, patterns of leisure, and a complex of other factors" (p. 21). What will be found when literacy is understood in this way, according to Szwed, is that "the roles of individuals and their places within social groups are preeminent in determining both what is read and written and what is necessary to reading and writing" (p. 15).

Michael Stubbs, in his book Language and Literacy: The Sociolinguistics of Reading and Writing (1980), also calls for studies of reading and writing practices in terms of the roles people give to them and the purposes they serve (p. viii, p. 16). But this is only part of his view of what is needed in a sociolinguistic view of literacy. He also argues for a definition of literacy which separates reading from writing because reading is not a "symmetrical mirror-image" of writing either in terms of the skills needed to engage in both of them, or in the ways in which they are used in real life situations (p. 105). The differences between reading and writing, he maintains, are primarily differences in function. For example, most of the people who read newspapers do not also write for newspapers; newspaper reading takes place in many places and for many purposes, whereas newspaper writing is structured much more narrowly as a form of employment. Thus, reading and writing are often functionally separate and different.

Stubbs also argues, much as Heath does, that the relationship between written language and spoken language must be included in a sociolinguistic analysis of literacy. At least three kinds of

relationships exist between written and spoken language: 1) chronological, 2) social, and 3) logical (p. 40). The second kind of relationship--the social--is particularly important from sociolinguistic and educational points of view, according to Stubbs, because people's beliefs and attitudes toward forms and functions of written and spoken language, or between reading and writing practices, cannot be ignored in describing what language is and how it is practised and learned. And, like other authors who stress a sociolinguistic perspective, Stubbs points out that different communities have different configurations of uses and values for both written and spoken language, and for both reading and writing. Stubbs explains the variability, however, in terms of the unique ways in which different communities relate reading to writing and spoken language to written language along both linguistic (structural) and sociolinguistic (functional) lines.

In summary, then, a sociolinguistic approach to literacy emphasizes the roles or functions attached to literacy practices in specific social contexts. These functions can be structured differently in different contexts and, as Saville-Troike points out, separate functions in the same context may be served by different languages. Szwed (1981) suggests a number of implications that arise from this highly variable nature of literacy between contexts. As researchers begin to describe the many different kinds of litracy practices and roles which occur in different localities, he says, it will become increasingly difficult to define literacy in terms of absolutes (p. 15). In a similar manner, he suggests that researchers will find, "not a single level of literacy, on a single continuum from reader to non-reader, but a variety of configurations of literacy, a plurality of literacies" (p. 16). This follows the emphasis scholars such as Scribner and Cole and Heath have placed on the distinct literacy practices which operate in different domains, and the unique configurations of uses for literacy found in different communities. Definitions of reading and writing which suggest only one generalized continuum of skills do not adequately describe this variability.

Stubbs also emphasizes the complexity of literacy. He describes literacy as a cluster of complex linguistic and social phenomena, differentiated according to context of use, according to individual practices, and having various levels of historical, linguistic, and socio-cultural relationships between different components. Thus, it is necessary in studies of literacy to define not only the different

literacies in use, but also the complex ways in which those literacies articulate with, and operate in, their contexts of use.

Professional Literature (Literacy)

In this section, I deal with some of the applied literature on adult basic literacy. Although this professional literature has for many years contained a concern (often implicitly) with everyday uses of written language, it has in most cases failed to squarely address language-use realities when dealing with multilingual contexts. This includes the UNESCO functional literacy movement, discussions of bilingual education, and discussions of language policy. Only in recent years has a sociolinguistic perspective begun to emerge in this professional literature to address multilingual situations. In what follows, I will briefly summarize UNESCO's functional literacy movement, the work of Paulo Freire, and a number of relevant bilingual education and language policy studies.

UNESCO--Functional Literacy

Professional literature in the field of literacy has until recently been closely tied to UNESCO and its attempts to support efforts around the world to provide public education to children and basic education to adults. UNESCO literature has emphasized for many years that literacy programs should be oriented to the conditions, tasks, and activities of illiterates' everyday lives. Unfortunately, this emphasis rarely extends to the language choice issue. As early as 1947, the authors of the UNESCO report, entitled Fundamental Education: Common Grounds for All Peoples, stated that one guiding principle for literacy planners was to "introduce a need to use reading and writing into the society on a community level" (p. 139). Although this literacy need was to be imported--created artificially, so to speak--the approach demonstrates a concern with making literacy part of the fabric of everyday life.

This emphasis on grounding literacy learning in everyday life appears again in the controversial functional literacy approach--a major movement in literacy discussions in the 1960s. William Gray, in his often quoted book entitled The Teaching of Reading and Writing (1956), defines functional literacy in culture-specific terms which depart from the fundamental education movement's emphasis on importing a literacy need. His definition is as follows:

> [A] person is functionally literate when he has acquired the knowledge and skills in reading and writing which enable him to engage effectively in all those activities in which literacy is

normally assumed in his culture or group. (p. 24)

Such a definition would begin to imply mother-tongue literacy.

This functional literacy movement never put this life-encompassing and culturally relative definition into practice. At the 1965 Tehran World Conference on the Eradication of Illiteracy, the term became narrowly associated with economic productivity and progress. It reflected only in theory an attempt to relate literacy to tasks and activities performed by the learners as a means of making learning immediately practical/relevant.

UNESCO's ten year (1965-1975) Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) attempted to implement the functional literacy approach. However, the focus remained narrowly focused on economic modernization and political legitimization goals in newly formed nations and tended to emphasize the assimilation of "marginalized" and "under-employed" traditional peoples into the modernizing industrial sectors. In terms of language, it often involved attempts to spread the official language. Many of the EWLP programs were aimed at assimilating large numbers of unschooled adults into the national wage-labour and consumer markets as part of national agendas to integrate local economies into national and international economies.

In 1975, at the International Symposium on Literacy held at Persepolis, authors such as Johan Galtung, Roger Garaudy, E. Verne, and Paulo Freire strongly criticized this functional literacy movement as a form of domination because it stressed adapting non-literates to the needs of an imported industrial economy rather than equipping non-literates to take part in deciding for themselves how to change economic, social, and political realities in their lives. The Declaration of Persepolis called for a greater respect for "the initiative of the populations concerned and to consultation with them, instead of abiding by bureaucratic decisions imposed from outside and above" (Bataille, 1976, p. 275). E. Verne argued that education should not aim "to adapt men to tools they neither make nor control" because such an approach creates rather than eliminates illiteracy by introducing a foreign, mystified technology (p. 223). Thus, the 1975 Persepolis conference emphasized that it was not enough to provide literacy training geared toward filling labour quotas for industrial interests in modernizing economies, but that literacy should involve helping adults learn how to use their "voice" in determining their lives.

In spite of the strong criticism that the UNESCO concept of functional literacy received at the Persepolis conference, it continues to be a catchword in the professional literature. Levine notes that functional literacy

> . . . endured its setbacks and it flourishes still, largely because it promises substantial collective and personal returns from equipping individuals with an ill defined but relatively modest level of competence. (1986, p. 35)

Scholars in a variety of disciplines, however, continue to take exception to it. Both Graff (1979) and Levine (1986), for example, point out that the term has primarily ideological rather than theoretical value. The term has more symbolic value than descriptive usefulness, according to Graff, and what it promises is often contradicted by reality (p. 7).

Levine argues that, because the criteria for functional literacy are normally established according to some externally determined social demands (often a somewhat arbitrary setting of grade levels), the model is primarily ideological in nature. "The notion of survival or adequate functioning is irremediably a political and moral abstraction," he maintains, because

> . . . however 'scientifically' and'objectively' it is presented, it will necessarily be derived from prior assumptions about the nature and functions of literacy in society which, in turn connect to contestable views on citizens' rights and the good life. (p. 41)

The point is that standards of functionality are often determined and defined, not according to the actual uses the people who are non-readers and writers have in their everyday lives, but according to pre-set and generalized notions of competence which stem from the social and political agendas established by those who provide the programs. Although Levine does not refer to a multilingual situation, his argument extends to decisions about which language is deemed functional, not according to actual uses minority-language groups make of language, but according to pre-set notions of dominant language competence.

Rockhill (1986) also criticizes the functional literacy movement in her analysis of literacy in the lives of low-education Latinos in Los Angeles. She discusses literacy only in terms of English language skills and therefore does not bring in uses for Spanish literacy, but in so doing, she raises the problem of functionality in terms of second language skills. She writes that when functional literacy is defined as a set of pre-established skills, it gets caught into an ideology of individualism which ignores the social realities in which people live.

An approach which defines individuals simply as either having or not having a particular set of skills frames literacy "as a commodity that the person, as agent, can choose to acquire or not" (p. 6). Rockhill argues that such a conceptualization "is to miss the fluidity of literacy as lived" (p. 7). Such an ideology of functionality, according to Rockhill, is based on the idea

> . . . that people are unable to function properly and that they need literacy in order to enable them to take their proper place in society. The specific ideological practices that flow from this idea are programs which teach people how to live their lives as the 'experts', who control the written word, would have them. (p.10)

Functional literacy in such terms comes to include "experts'" assumptions about the set of English literacy and oral skills which minority-language individuals should acquire in order to take their proper place in this society.

The functional literacy movement, then, has been, and continues to be, controversial. An important reason for the controversy is that, regardless of its orientation toward everyday uses, it treats literacy as a set of skills which can be prescribed in advance and in a generalized way and therefore fails to come to terms with the complexities of "the fluidity of literacy as lived." It is crucial, therefore, not to confuse functional literacy with the theoretical framework of this study, based on <u>functions</u> of literacy. Functional literacy and functions of literacy are two very different uses of similar terminology which need to be distinguished from each other. The sociolinguistic emphasis on the uses people make of language (in this case, written language) differs from functional literacy in the ideological and political sense illustrated above by Levine and Rockhill because a functions and practice-oriented approach describes actual uses people themselves make of literacy and the purposes they themselves have for using it as opposed to externally and pre-defined criteria in which a target group is deemed to be deficient in relation to dominant society norms.

Freire--The Learner's Voice

Paulo Freire's work dominates the field of applied literacy. I identified Freire earlier as one of the primary critics of UNESCO's functional literacy approach at the Persepolis literacy conference. Freire popularized a learner-centered approach to literacy which is pertinent to this study because it not only relates literacy learning to

everyday realities, it also provides an approach to literacy learning which begins to address the issue of the way people themselves use language. Unfortunately, it stops just short of dealing with multilingual and multi-ethnic issues.

Freire's approach focuses on the adult learner's world of meaning by basing literacy learning on immediate problems faced by non-literates. It uses literacy as a means of bringing non-literates to "name," or take control of, their own world and thereby legitimize their own "culture" (1970, pp. 76ff). The first step in Freire's approach requires the discovery of meaningful "generative" words from the non-literate's everyday world. The process of learning depends on the dialogue which occurs in discussions about actual problems faced by the community. These discussions are based on, and arise out of, the generative words (1970, pp. 84 ff.).

However, even though Freire emphasizes the use of local knowledge and local terminology to discuss local issues, he does not address the problem of mother tongue versus official language. He does address the issue of minority culture versus dominant culture because he depicts the process of learning as a process in which people, dehumanized by exploitation (the poor, largely non-literate lower classes), become aware of themselves as producers of legitimate culture. But it is important to understand what Freire means by the term "culture" because his use of the word has more to do with class consciousness than with the legitimization of ethnic ways of life. His concept of culture in a general way refers to the process of becoming more human (because to be human is to be a creator of one's own world--culture) rather than with the issue of coming to value one's ethnic distinctiveness. As a result, he seems to overlook native language and ethnicity in his discussion and therefore falls short of coming to terms with language as used in multilingual situations. He fails to include a treatment of the people's use of their native language in conflict with the dominant language in his discussion of the need to develop the people's own "voice." Nevertheless, his approach addresses the phenomenological dimension of literacy needs and literacy uses and therefore provides a perspective which is relevant to this study.

Bilingual Education

The professional research in the field of bilingual education reflects a history similar to other applied areas of literacy research. The

research in bilingual education has focused on the search for generalizable principles about cognitive or intellectual effects of learning literacy skills initially in a mother tongue before switching to a second language as opposed to learning those skills from the outset in a second language. The findings, however, have not demonstrated the superiority of either starting with mother tongue literacy or of using second language literacy from the start. The contradictory results have led researchers to adopt increasingly complex models. As Jim Cummins (1985) observes, rather than providing an adequate "unidimensional linguistic explanation," the variability in bilingual education research findings "indicates that multidimensional and interactive causal factors are at work" (p.4).

The factors have ranged from linguistic, cultural, social, and psychological variables to the training of teachers and availability of materials. Some researchers are now turning to a sociolinguistic perspective in order to integrate some of the findings. Carew Treffgarne (1981), in an article which critiques the World Bank's approach to the language choice question taken in its 1980 Education Sector Policy Paper, summarizes some of the main research findings on "education through more than one language medium" as follows:

> Contradictory results . . . will continue to abound, not only because of methodological difficulties of comparing different research projects, but also because of the problem of matching the many variables that can influence particular sociolinguistic contexts. Significant variables include socio-economic status, age, religiosity, prevailing social and cultural values and aspirations. The prestige and function of first and second languages in the home, community and national life . . . appears to be of fundamental importance. (p. 166)

Thus, the language choice controversy in bilingual education has not been settled but is beginning to focus on a sociolinguistic concern for language values and language functions in various contexts. Barbara Burnaby and Marguerite MacKenzie (1985) and Marie Battiste (1985), for example, have begun to focus on the sociolinguistic features of specific contexts in their studies of languages and education for Native Canadian children. Battiste argues that "despite the search for universal normative standards, little is known about the role and functions of literacy within various cultural contexts and about how these contexts affect attitudes and values toward literacy" (p. 7). Burnaby and MacKenzie, in an investigation of reading and writing practices in a Native Canadian community, demonstrate that "majority-culture concepts

about literacy, particularly as they are manifested in schooling, are not the only concepts of literacy which have the force of reality in the community" (p, 57).

Bilingual education researchers in Latin America have also begun to employ a sociolinguistic perspective. Describing the Otomi Indians of Mexico, for example, Rainer Enrique Hamel (1984) comments that sociolinguistic factors are central to explaining the sociopolitical and the cultural aspects and the psycholinguistic and pedagogical aspects of bilingual education in a given multilingual context. He describes sociolinguistic factors as "the relationship between learning to read and write and the usefulness of that attainment in daily life" (p. 116). The implications of this sociolinguistic approach become social and political, as Coronado, Enriquez, and Ortega (1984) point out in their explanation of the shortcomings of the Mexican bilingual education system. They write:

> The existing contradictions between these language policies which are imposed vertically by the dominant sectors and the different kinds of linguistic behaviours that have developed in the everyday practices of Native Indian communities is the basis for the failure of the linguistic project of the nation. (1984, p. 21, my translation)

The language issue in bilingual education, then, is being theorized not only in terms of a host of educational quality factors but also in terms of sociolinguistic realities. The field research that has been done in the area of language choice for literacy programs has tended, however, to look primarily at formal bilingual education for children. There has been very little systematic study of bilingual adult basic literacy programs.

[4]Planners and decision makers in basic education programs for multilingual adults in North America have yet to develop a bilingual perspective let alone a sociolinguistic perspective.

Shaw--Language Policy

For more than three decades, UNESCO related literature has contained discussions about language decisions for adult literacy programs in multilingual contexts. Even earlier, the Russian literacy campaign, which started after the 1917 revolution, was considered to be a largely successful multilingual experiment and an important model for many

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[4]For one example, see Om Shrivastava, 1980.

subsequent literacy movements worldwide. Unfortunately, the many literacy programs and campaigns undertaken around the world in this century have provided little systematic evaluation of how language decisions have been made and what has resulted from the decisions. Willard Shaw (1983) suggests that few reports mention how language decisions are made either because in most cases the official language is taken for granted as the medium of instruction, or because the reports avoid a problem which is willfully being neglected due, perhaps, to its overwhelming complexity or to its sensitivity for political reasons (p. 47). UNESCO gets caught, according to Shaw, in a national political frame of reference in the language decision issue by centering more on nation building--the legitimation of newly independent states and the accompanying but often conflicting issue of cultural group identity--than on the actual roles of language in given situations or on what learners would find most relevant to their needs and aspirations.

UNESCO has consistently maintained a stance in favour of mother-tongue literacy for everyone. UNESCO's single mindedness on this issue probably stems from pedagogical reasons (ease of learning) as well as a commitment to culture maintenance (resisting assimilationist policies). This "axiomatic" stance (i.e., it is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching is the mother tongue of the pupil) adopted in the 1953 report of experts on The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, however, came to be seen only as an ideal after later reports acknowledged more explicitly that other economic, political, and logistical complexities must be seen realistically, requiring a compromise of the ideal. Shaw points out, however, that the language discussion has remained so oriented toward the mother tongue versus official language dichotomy that other ways of conceptualizing the problems which are more appropriate to real language-use situations have rarely been considered (p. 43).

Two UNESCO regional conferences are significant in this respect, however, because they related the language decision in literacy programs to the learners' goals and aspirations, but the advice appears to have been before its time. As Shaw explains, one regional conference in Africa in 1964 identified "utility to the learner" as one of four factors to be considered in the language choice issue. In the same year another African conference stressed motivational factors in a way which departed from the traditional emphasis on national development goals and materials preparation by focusing instead on the learners. As Shaw observes,

> The injection of human aspirations into the language choice debate was an important step in coming to terms with the problem and its solutions. Previous reports seemed to forget about the primacy of the learner in their attempts to promote the ideal of mother tongue instruction for all. (p. 41)

The participants at the conference stressed in the report that

> . . . a language policy for literacy should not be dictated by political considerations or by theoretical criteria alone, but . . . the authorities concerned should also take into account the wishes and interests of the potential learners before committing themselves to a particular approach. (UNESCO 1964, as cited in Shaw, p. 42)

Shaw criticizes the UNESCO literature, then, for rarely taking into account the target populations' perspectives.

Shaw (1983) provides one of the few comprehensive arguments I found in the literature for investigating the uses learners themselves have for literacy as an important part of the criteria for making language decisions in literacy programs. He reviews the literature from a variety of areas including UNESCO literacy and adult education reports, reading theory, second language acquisition theory, and bilingual education studies and he concludes that the language choice issue is complex, affected by a host of linguistic, socio-cultural, pedagogical, psychological, economic, and political factors making each location unique and requiring individual, compromise solutions. He argues, however, that these factors are subsumed into three constellations that make up what he calls three "crucial factors." These are: a) the roles of languages in the target context, b) the goals of the program, and c) the goals of the learners (p. 217).

Shaw gives special attention to the first and third factors--language roles and learners' goals--probably because the second factor, program goals, tends to be the usual focus of literacy programs to the neglect of learners' goals and language roles. Shaw considers the first factor (the sociolinguistic or socio-cultural reality of how language actually functions and gets used) to be the "given"--"the field upon which the decision maker must play." He maintains that this "[given] cannot be changed by literacy personnel to suit their needs" (p. 217). Shaw goes on to argue that decision makers

> . . . must try to make a choice which is reinforced by the language environment and not subverted by it . . . . They must know which languages are important in different domains such as the political, economic, and religious spheres of life. (p. 217)

Shaw, however, emphasizes that decision makers "must be careful not to depend solely on their own assessment of the language environment, but

to discover how the prospective learners view that environment" (p. 217). He argues for a decision making process which involves negotiation between planners and prospective learners in a way which takes the social dimensions of language use in specific localities into consideration.

The professional literature on literacy, then, has only in a small number of cases begun to build literacy theory in ways which reflect the variability and complexities of language-use realities in different social settings. In spite of the attempts by proponents of functional literacy to bring a pragmatic and use-oriented perspective to the delivery of literacy programs, they have failed to take into account the way in which literacy actually articulates with the everyday lives of people in specific social settings. Freire provides a perspective on literacy which takes seriously the language in use in specific localities, but he does not extend his discussion to multilingual language-use situations. Researchers in the field of bilingual education for children are beginning to adopt a sociolinguistic perspective in order to deal with the complexities of multilingual settings. And specifically in the field of language policy, Shaw provides a theoretical model for adult basic literacy programs which focuses on language as it operates in the everyday lives of minority-language people in multilingual situations. I will now turn to a separate body of literature--the second language learning literature.

Professional Literature (Second Language Learning)

Up until this point, I have focused primarily on literacy studies. A recent movement in second language learning theory, however, emphasizes a sociolinguistic perspective similar to the one I have discussed above in relation to literacy. Although the field of second language learning contributes very little to discussions of adult basic literacy[5] or mother tongue literacy, its concern with functions of language in everyday life provides a point of departure for extending its vision to include an appreciation for how different languages often play separate roles in a speech community, and how different speech communities uniquely structure the ways in which language operates for them.

The movement within second language learning which focuses on

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[5]The field of second language learning does address reading and writing for children and schooled adults, but rarely does it deal with literacy for adults who are not literate in their own language.

functions of language is called communicative language learning. Because the field of second language learning as a whole looks to linguists for theoretical guidance, language learning approaches have often paralleled developments in the field of linguistics. According to C.J. Brumfit and K. Johnson (1979),

> The language teacher's emphasis over the past few decades runs parallel to a similar emphasis within linguistics (or, more precisely, American linguistics) . . . . Linguistics [American structuralism as well as Chomsky's transformational grammar] was, almost exclusively, the study of language structure. (p. 2)

A reaction to this view, however,was triggered to a great extent by sociolinguistics theory. According to Brumfit and Johnson, what resulted was a view of language "in which meaning and the uses to which language is put play a central part" (p. 3). Similarily, H. Douglas Brown (1980) writes:

> Until recently, linguistic research focused on linguistic forms and upon descriptions of the structure of language. But we have seen a shift of interest now to semantic descriptions, to sociolinguistic inquiry, and to language as part of the total communicative conduct of communities. (p. 190)

The emphasis in second language learning theory has shifted, then, to what Brown calls "the pragmatic purposes of language." He maintains that it is these pragmatic purposes which are "the final and ultimate objective of the second language learner" (p. 189).

The communicative language learning approach emphasizes one other point in sociolinguistic theory. There is a lack of realism, according to Hymes, in a theory of language based on "ideal speaker-listeners" in "homogenous speech communities." Brumfit and Johnson (1979) argue that a view of language is needed in second language learning theory which sees language in terms of "non-ideal speaker-listeners" operating in a "non-homogenous speech community" (p. 4). Such a view opens the door for considering how various languages operate together in multilingual situations. Little attention, however, has been given to this issue in the field of second language learning except in terms of obstacles, such as interference caused by first language habits and patterns, pidginization, and interlanguage, as well as language learning problems due to language identity and values. Second language learning theory, however, rarely addresses the issue of mother-tongue language practices and functions coexisting and interacting with second language practices and functions.

Gail Weinstein (1984) is one of the few in the field of ESL who has

begun to raise some of these issues, specifically in terms of literacy. She raises the question of how the patterns of language use and of language learning which non-English speakers bring with them differ from standard English language uses and language learning patterns. She focuses particularly on adults with little or no previous schooling and poses the problem in terms of the difficulty non-literates have in second language classrooms. Part of the problem, she suggests, is that non-literate minority-language adults have never used language, oral or written, in the ways in which it is used in formal educational settings. Weinstein argues that researchers need to take into account how reading and writing are organized and practiced within the broader social, cultural, and economic contexts in which a given minority group is situated. She combines second language acquisition theory and adult basic literacy theory to argue her point. She highlights Stephen Krashen's hypotheses that "individuals can acquire a second language when they have access to comprehensible input" and that this input occurs "when the acquirer participates in natural communication" where the focus in the communication "is on the message rather than on the language form" (as cited in Weinstein, 1984, p. 474).

Such an emphasis supports the communicative language learning approach in ESL theory discussed earlier. Weinstein, however, combines this second language acquisition emphasis on comprehensible input, natural communication, and emphasis on message over form with the literacy research that focuses on describing the "social organization that encourages or restrains uses of literacy" (p. 476). This "social organization of reading and writing" approach complements Krashen's language acquisition hypotheses, according to Weinstein, because it raises a number of questions about how a given context obstructs non-literates from getting comprehensible input, about where comprehensible input is available, and about what possibilities are available to non-literates for communicative interaction which is natural to them (p. 476).

Weinstein cites a number of studies which look at the social organization of literacy in various contexts to show that "the practices of reading and writing are inextricably bound up with specific uses by particular actors from their different positions in the social order" (p. 480). She points out that, in the urban North American "culture of literacy," non-literate immigrants are obstructed from attempting to

interact in English in most settings they encounter. The one exception is the language classroom. The classroom is itself, however, a specific setting which is structured around "schooled" modes of discourse and forms of decontextualized language use that are not only distinct from the communicative contexts and communicative practices that non-literate students find most natural, useful, and meaningful, but they are also (and consequently) types of language use which are inaccessible as comprehensible input for non-schooled adults. Thus, comprehensible input and natural communicative settings are not available to non-schooled adults even in the language classroom.

Summary: Literacies and Languages

The literature I have discussed above emphasizes the roles of language, specifically literacy, in everyday life. Three important issues emerge as common denominators in most of these studies--an emphasis on how language is actually used (people's everyday language practices), an emphasis on the fact that these language practices vary according to (and take on their specific form due to) the specific social and cultural contexts in which they occur, and an emphasis on how shared understandings, beliefs, and values about the uses of language form an important facet of these social and cultural contexts. These three issues together form the basis for the sociolinguistic perspective which I use as a theoretical framework for this study.

Literacy is the specific language phenomenon with which I am concerned, and a sociolinguistic approach to the discussion of literacy involves emphases on these three issues. As I have shown above, studies which have followed similar approaches have discovered a wide range of literacy practices which serve distinct roles, and that the configurations of these roles vary from group to group and society to society. These findings imply that there is no such thing as one general form of literacy competence. Levine (1986) makes this same point. He argues that literacy must be redefined and that

> . . . the first step is to discard an albatross of an idea--that literacy is a single, unified competence--and to begin to think wherever possible in terms of a multiplicity or hierarchy of literacies. (p. 43)

The findings of the studies I have mentioned also imply that a given literacy exists in order to accomplish specific purposes or to take on specific roles in a particular setting. This is one of the main issues behind the concept of functions of literacy, and it has to do with the

sets of beliefs, understandings, and values which are part of a given social context. Functions help shape the form a literacy takes and therefore should appear as an important part of any discussion about kinds of literacies.

This issue of functions is central to a sociolinguistic perspective, and it is one of the primary components of a rationale for talking in terms of many literacies rather than in terms of one generalized literacy. But the term language functions, as I use it, is difficult to define. The meaning must, to a large extent, emerge by implication as I use it throughout the thesis. I have already, for example, distinguished a functions approach to literacy from functional literacy. There are at least two sides to the concept as Hymes and Halliday use it--1) the uses people actually make of language, and 2) the roles language practices serve in the social settings in which individuals live.

One of the problems with defining language functions is that different authors classify language functions in different ways. Halliday, for example, classifies language functions along very general lines as ideational, interpersonal, and textual (Savignon, 1983, pp. 14-15). Saville-Troike (1982) divides language functions into a wider range of categories. She distinguishes between societal, group, and individual patterning of language functions. This helps to clarify the complex interplay between societal, group, and individual levels at which language operates. Socialization into a particular way of using, valuing, and identifying with languages occurs at these different levels. Graff (1979) makes the same point in terms of literacy functions (p. 321).

Saville-Troike (1982) suggests that at the individual level, language functions can be categorized according to the needs and uses individuals have for language, such as expressive, directive, referential, poetic, phatic, and metalinguistic uses (p. 16). Hymes (1979) illustrates individual functions as language being organized, not only to name things, but also "to lament, rejoice, beseech, admonish, aphorize, inveigh" (1979, p. 15). Shaw (1983) combines the group and individual levels of language functions in his list--expressive, communicative, separatist, participatory, imaginative (p. 127). At the individual level, the functions of literacy (as opposed to functions of language) often are divided into instrumental categories such as communication over

space, record keeping over time, and personal memory related. Literacy also operates in individuals' lives in terms of prestige, access to certain domains, and in molding individual roles and attitudes in social settings. This topic of different schemes of categorization for functions and uses is raised again in chapter 5.

Saville-Troike, along with others, suggests that at the societal level, the way in which language is used and understood to operate often serves to unify and separate people, functioning as a means of group identification and social stratification (p. 20). Hymes suggests that, in terms of cultural attitudes of a group, language can function to separate and unify, ascribe levels of prestige, and operate as a frame of reference in terms of group norms (p. 1980, p. 5). Fishman analyzes the conflict between the functions of authentification and unification when different local and national languages clash in processes of political domination, assimilation, and resistance (1971, p5). Similarly, Graff argues that, at the societal level, literacy functions are in effect more abstract and symbolic, as a kind of social mythology, than in the actual instrumental, social, and economic benefits reading and writing actually bring (1979, p. 9).

The way in which functions can be classified according to different schemes reveals both the complexity of social situations as well as the fact that different contexts and different groups structure the uses of language in their own ways. This is why Hymes (1980) warns that a theory of functions must remain comparative to avoid becoming ethnocentric. Thus, he writes that the problem of overcoming inequality due to different functions of language in different speech communities is first of all a problem of discovering from an analysis of each community what those different functions are (p. 50). The way in which language functions vary from place to place and group to group carries over to the functions of written language. As Whiteman and Hall (1981) observe, "There are different <u>kinds</u> of writing which serve different functions for different groups of people at different times" (p. 2). Thus, Hymes' warning about keeping theories of functions comparative to avoid ethnocentricity in the definition of functions applies as well to the functions of literacy.

I have referred above both to functions of language and to functions of literacy. The broader issue of the functions of the various languages and the more specific issue of functions of the various literacies come

together in this study because the phenomenon I am dealing with includes both the broader issue of how distinct languages come to operate in a multilingual setting and the narrower issue of how written language in particular operates in a multilingual setting. As I indicated earlier, I found few studies that take a literacy functions approach for discussions about adult basic literacy in multilingual situations. Authors such as Shaw and various bilingual education researchers have started to point to the need for such research, but little actual comparative sociolinguistic description of literacy functions is available. This, however, is changing as researchers such as Scribner and Cole, Burnaby and MacKenzie, and Wagner, Messick, and Spratt (1986) are providing descriptions of literacy functions in non-urban, largely non-Western, often multilingual societies. The primary force of their findings is that literacies in different languages in the same context tend to serve separate functions, that different groups structure the functions of literacy in their own unique ways, and that different languages, literacies, and the functions they serve operate in an ideologically charged environment in which people's beliefs, understandings, and values about literacy and language are linked to the ways in which literacies come to operate in given social contexts.

To summarize, then, a sociolinguistic theory of literacy defines literacy in terms of the different settings in which it operates and in terms of the functions or roles it takes on in those settings. Such a view points out that different competencies or even different literacies (perhaps in different languages) are required by different contexts. But these requirements do not simply arise mechanically from the technical characteristics of a given situation. There is a meaning or value component which also operates in determining the roles that literacy takes on. The term "functions of literacy", therefore, contains not only the linguistic and instrumental or technological features of written language, but also (and perhaps more importantly) the social roles and cultural patterns of literacy which help determine how written language gets used.

And functions of literacy can be seen to operate at individual, group, and social levels, with important relations existing between these various levels. This understanding of functions, as roles which are socially and differentially ascribed at individual, group, and societal levels and which include not only individual uses and projects for

literacy, but also broader social significance and dynamics of access, exclusion, and social ascription, is significantly different from a simple definition of functional literacy seen as minimum survival competencies pre-defined by the dominant society for a non-mainstream group.

When this sociolinguistic perspective on literacy is used to study a multilingual situation, additional issues emerge, such as language identity and values, the use of different written languages for different purposes, ways of using written and oral language in the different languages, the individual, group, and social functions each language takes on in various settings, and so forth. Thus, this review of the literature points to the need for studies of literacy which include not only a description of the kinds of language practices and skills the individuals use in those separate contexts, and the way in which the different contexts are organized around written language in one or another language, but also an analysis of the social, cultural, and political language dynamics of the separate contexts. These are some of the issues which are addressed throughout the rest of this thesis.

THE PROBLEM IN TORONTO

The phenomenon which I seek to investigate in this study is the experience low-education minority-language adults have of written language in Toronto. I have traced through the relevant literature the importance various authors give to investigations of this kind. What remains to discuss are some of the features of the phenomenon itself--the kinds of difficulties low-education minority-language adults experience and the numbers of individuals involved. I will therefore focus on three issues in this section--1) what the literature has to say about the kinds of difficulties low-education minority-language adults experience in North America, 2) a general indication of the sizes of different groups of minority-language adults who likely experience such difficulties in Toronto, and 3) a more detailed discussion of what available statistics suggest about the specific language group which I used as the basis for this study--low-education hispanics in Toronto.

The literature suggests that non-literate and low-education minority-language adults experience difficulty in a number of contexts. The second language classroom is mentioned most often. Both Weinstein (1984) and Tollefson (1985) report that researchers, English teachers, and community workers agree that non-literate southeast Asian adults

"have less success" in and "are not as well served" by ESL classes as their literate and educated counterparts. Alison d'Anglejan (1983) describes the frustration, anxiety, and learning difficulties experienced by low-education and non-literate minority-language adults in French as second language classes in Montreal. Rockhill (1982) describes similar problems faced by Latino adults in California ESL classes.

A number of other contexts are also identified in the literature. Rockhill (1982, 1984) refers to difficulties low-education Latinos have with the California health care bureaucracy and the legal systems, and with moving out of Spanish-language ghettoes and low paying, menial categories of work. Tollefson (1985) also reviews what studies indicate about the relation between mother-tongue literacy, English proficiency, and employment for Southeast Asian refugees. English, he claims, is the best predictor of employment, but English is learned best by schooled and literate individuals. Mata (1983b) also found that for Spanish-speaking adults in Toronto, English language proficiency is closely related to success in moving out of "job stagnation" in menial positions. What the literature identifies, then, in terms of difficulties faced by low-education minority-language adults falls primarily into two categories--learning the dominant language and employment opportunities.

It is sufficient here to provide only general indications of numbers of low-education minority-language adults in Ontario because the objective is to establish the fact that a problem exists for a sizable group of people. Recent statistics reported by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture (see the table on the following page) provide an indication of the numbers of low-education, non-English speaking adults in Ontario. The figures give some idea not only of the number of newcomers entering according to their language of origin or country of last residence, but also of the sizes of different language groups already existing in Toronto. What the numbers indicate is that newcomers with low education come in relatively large numbers from such places as Portugal, India, Southeast Asia, Italy, and Latin America. The percentage these figures make up of the total number of adults fifteen years of age and older from each country are also indicative of the levels of education of each group as a whole. The groups from Portugal and Southeast Asia have particularly high percentages.

The table on the following page reports the number of newcomers to Toronto who are fifteen years of age and over with less than five years

of education for a number of representative countries of origin (the first row--the number of low-education adults arriving to Canada from that country; the second row--the percentage this makes of the total number of adults arriving from that country).

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Portugal	644 66%	421 63%	249 54%	317 56%	302 61%
South Asia	584 27%	464 24%	405 22%	506 23%	165 19%
Southeast Asia	142 13%	166 16%	255 19%	489 20%	423 21%
Italy	141 25%	84 21%	59 25%	70 22%	53 22%
Latin America	87 9%	58 6%	57 6%	71 5%	96 7%

For this study, I have chosen one language group in particular to treat as one case among many. I chose Hispanos for one reason--I can speak Spanish well enough to conduct interviews in that language. As can be seen in the table above, in comparison to the low-education Portuguese newcomers, who number in the hundreds in each of the five years, and who make up more than half of the Portuguese adults who immigrated in that period, the numbers of low-education Hispano adults ranges only between fifty and one hundred each year, and they make up less than ten per cent of the number of Hispano newcomers.

Although these figures indicate that, in comparison to other groups, the hispanic community in Toronto contains a low number of low-education individuals, the figures do not adequately represent the dimensions of the problem. What the numbers above do not reveal (among other things) are immigration trends. Mata (1983b) conducted a large scale statistical study to determine the socio-economic profile of the Hispanic community in Metropolitan Toronto. In his report, he describes the different "waves" of Latin American immigration to Toronto caused largely by economic "crunches" and political crises in the home countries. He writes, "Beginning in the late 60's, we can begin by observing a strong interaction between the state of the Canadian economy and the pressures arising from the economic and political crises in many Latin American nations" (p. 2). His figures show that a wave of Ecuadorians came in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This group continues to represent one of the

largest groups by nationality in Toronto (34% of Hispanos). In the 1970s, a wave of newcomers also arrived from the southern cone countries of South America (Chile-19%, Uruguay-10%, and Argentina-5%, p. 12). The latest wave, which was just starting when Mata conducted his study, is due to civil war in Central America. There has been a substantial increase of refugees from El Salvador in particular since Mata's study. Statistics from the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture depict a rising curve as suggested by the following figures on El Salvadorean immigration: 1981 - 87 people; 1982 - 232 people; 1983 - 945 people; 1984 - 1,008 people; 1985 - 1,089 people.

Although the waves indicate sudden increases in numbers of people immigrating from a particular country, the waves do not stop as rapidly as they start. The same tables also show that, after the numbers peaked with groups from Ecuador and the southern cone countries, many people continued to come from those countries. Numbers of immigrants to Canada from Chile, for example, jumped from below 500 in 1973 to almost 2,000 in 1974, peaked in 1975 with just under 2,300, but the numbers have remained at over 1,000 per year. Over 1,000 Ecuadorians were still arriving in Canada in 1973 (the majority destined for Toronto) and although the number fell to less than 300 in 1979 and in 1980, it jumped back up to 555 in 1981 (1983a, p. 10). And all indications suggest that the current Central American wave will continue not only because there is no end in sight to the Central American civil wars and/or regimes which uproot large numbers of the rural populace, but also because of the recent American immigration crackdown which has resulted in a flood of Central Americans to Canadian border crossings. These figures give some idea of the waves of newcomers that have come from Latin America as well as the continuing influx of individuals even after the waves have peaked.

Another characteristic of the Latin American community in Toronto is that groups from different countries tend to have different educational profiles. Mata observed in his report that although all the countries have a noticeable split between well educated, upwardly mobile, economically stable individuals and low income "socially stagnated" individuals, the proportion of people in each of these two groups varies from country to country. The Ecuadorian group, for example, has a lower percentage of individuals with post secondary education (twelve per cent) than any other group. In the other categories, including Central American nationalities in the 1983 study, individuals with post secondary

education made up from thirty per cent to forty seven per cent of their respective national groups (1983b, p. 22). It is perhaps not surprising, then, that although levels of education do not relate to employment as directly as English proficiency, the relative scarcity of individuals with post secondary education among the Ecuadorian population can help explain why Ecuadorians perform "unskilled jobs at higher rates than any other national group" (1983b, p. 20).

More recent statistics suggest that these percentages are changing due to the arrival of a new kind of refugee from Central America. Only for the last two years have Central American figures been kept separate from South American figures, but the statistics for 1985 indicate that 61 per cent of all Hispano low-education adults come from Central America. Another source of statistics, provided by Ontario Welcome House, corroborates this shift to higher percentages of low-education Central Americans entering Canada. These statistics indicate that, for a one and a half year period in 1984 and 1985, only seven per cent of the Ecuadorians they served had post secondary educations whereas twenty-five per cent of the Chileans served had post secondary education. This corroborates Mata's findings about levels of education for different national groups. Only ten per cent of the El Salvadoreans in the Welcome House statistics, however, had post secondary education. But these statistics also report that only four per cent of the El Salvadoreans had less than elementary. In total numbers, however, there were sixty El Salvadoreans with less than elementary education. No other country categorized as a point of origin for Spanish-speaking clients listed more than eight individuals with less than elementary education. Thus, the El Salvadorean group is clearly over represented. Although Ontario Welcome House figures are based on counselors' informal assessments of level of education, and therefore are subjective and not corroborated in other ways, these figures suggest two things in particular: 1) low-education adults appear to represent only a small proportion of the entire Latin American population (around seven per cent), but 2) El Salvadoreans are arriving in such large numbers that the low-education adults among them form a relatively large group.

Another important aspect of attempting to describe how many low-education Hispanic adults live in Toronto is the issue of the hidden population. It is difficult to say how accurately the statistics above represent the actual influx of Latin Americans to Toronto. As Mata

(1983a) points out for his study on Latin American immigration to Canada,

> Immigrants are defined as those individuals who were lawfully permitted to settle in Canada and have a permanent residence there. No data is available for the proportion of immigrants who were previously visitors, refugees or illegals. (p. 2)

Thus, immigration statistics do not adequately reflect the actual number of Hispanos in Toronto. And Welcome House statistics reflect only those individuals who use the Welcome House services. One of Mata's findings in his large-scale survey of Hispanos in Toronto was that those who used settlement services offered by various organizations tended to be the more educated and professional adults (1983b, p. 38). He also found that forty one percent of his respondents had taken no advantage of schooling opportunities and fifty six per cent did not know about health care premium assistance. Such findings suggest that many newcomers do not use the settlement services provided by various institutions (pp. 45-46, 58-59). Because records kept by these service organizations do not accurately reflect how many low-education Hispano adults live in Toronto, then, the conclusion to be made is that there are more, perhaps many more, low-education Hispano adults in Toronto.

The available statistics on levels of education are also somewhat misleading. The Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture tables use five years and under as the lowest category of education. The problem with this cutoff point is that there is an enormous difference between five years of education and no years of education. Many Latin American adults with five years of education have a wide range of reading, writing, and numeracy skills as well as formal classroom experience which most non-schooled individuals would not have. A statement made by one of the women in my sample illustrates this point. She told me that she had no education but that her husband had many years of education--six years. She knows it is possible for him to learn English in ESL classes and get into training programs in a way that is impossible for her. Thus, what constitutes low-education, and how well such a category relates to other factors such as literacy, access, and participation in different domains of life in Toronto will be a problem which continues to emerge throughout this thesis.

The dimensions of the problem I deal with in this thesis, then, are unclear in a number of respects. But the fact that relatively large numbers of low-education Hispano adults from a variety of Latin American

countries live in Toronto, and continue to arrive in large numbers due to a large extent to the current exodus of refugees from El Salvador, gives a good indication that the Hispano population provides an important case to study.

CONCLUSION

The structure for this study, then, stems from a specific approach to the phenomenon in question. I have described at length the importance the literature gives to pursuing an approach sensitive to the way in which language is used in specific contexts. This discussion has provided a theoretical foundation from which to work. The discussion has also provided a rationale for the use of this approach because the approach itself is only now gaining widespread acceptance as a way of investigating education-related phenomena. The discussion also serves to show that the approach is appropriate to the adult basic education needs in Toronto because it is important to ask how to make language decisions in multilingual language-use situations. This question, however, has rarely been raised in Toronto because English tends to be taken for granted as the only possibility. It has been necessary to dwell on the debates about literacy theory because the phenomenon is complex and ways of talking about it have been vague and confused, and often more rhetorical than analytical. This investigation attempts to show that, for literacy to be properly understood, it is essential to describe how it operates in everyday contexts and social systems. This is particularly important when more than one language group is involved.

In the chapters which follow, I describe how I applied this approach to a study of Hispano low-education adults in Toronto, what I found, and how my findings relate to the findings and arguments put forward in other related studies and works. Chapter 2, then, contains a discussion of the methodology I employed. Chapters 3 and 4 report my findings in a format which reflects the framework of analysis which emerged during the course of the study and chapter 5 compares my findings to what other writers and researchers have to say about related issues and work. The final chapter, the conclusion, presents some of the implications that can be extracted from my findings, aimed primarily at suggesting alternative formulations of language policy for educational programs for minority-language adults in Toronto.

CHAPTER 2--METHODOLOGY

In the first chapter, I devoted a significant part of the discussion to an explanation of a specific approach--what I termed a sociolinguistic approach. I summarized arguments from the fields of linguistics, second language learning, and literacy which call for a sociolinguistic approach to the study of language phenomena. This chapter explains the methodology I adopted to implement this sociolinguistic approach. By methodology, however, I do not mean only the actual data gathering techniques I used, but also the principles which guide or inform the investigative practices I used. This chapter, therefore, is divided into two parts: 1) an explanation of the basic principles behind the methodology, 2) and a description of the actual investigative practices I used to undertake this study. The chapter will finish with a brief description of the way in which I analyzed and interpreted the data, and an explanation of my own interests and stance in this investigation.

QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

This investigation fits into the qualitative research tradition. What characterizes the qualitative tradition is its focus on the subjective dimensions of human experience rather than depending primarily on the more objective or empirical dimensions of social contexts and practices. Morgan and Smircich's (1980) continuum, which places the more phenomenological approaches on one extreme and the more experimental positivist approaches on the other extreme, is a scheme which demonstrates how the various qualitative approaches distinguish themselves from experimental and empirical descriptive approaches.

Morgan and Smircich (1980) observe that the appropriateness of using qualitative research "derives from the nature of the social phenomenon to be explored" (p. 491). Graff (1986) gives a useful example from his field--history of literacy. He states that, although historians have used various kinds of records (census, voting registration, school records) to describe how many people possessed roughly estimated levels of literacy at specific times and places in history, these numbers do not reveal what literate people used their reading and writing skills for, nor what having those skills entailed in the social contexts in which they were used. Historical studies have demonstrated, he argues, that the specific kinds of demands people have for literacy, their motivation to acquire literacy skills, and their perceptions of its value help explain "the changing historical contours of popular literacy" much better than do numerical data on literacy rates (p. 130). It follows

that, if literacy has this important subjective component, investigators of literacy must have research models which attempt to take this subjective element into account.

The social phenomena with which qualitative research primarily concerns itself, as implied above, is the general issue of the nature of humans as subjects in the social contexts in which they live. The most often used qualitative methodologies have roots in the field of cultural anthropology. Theories of culture must deal with the ways in which groups of people have shared ways of perceiving and participating in their worlds and require data, not only about behaviour or artifacts, but also about shared systems of belief, knowledge, and values which give meaning to the behaviour and artifacts. These shared systems of meanings is what Street refers to as shared ideologies. The research methodologies developed by anthropologists to investigate both the empirical and subjective dimensions of a culture fall under the rubric of ethnography, and some of the principles of ethnography provide the framework for this study.

Practitioners and researchers alike interested in the field of literacy studies are calling for ethnographies of literacy. Stubbs (1980), for example, implies that a sound sociolinguistic theory of literacy cannot emerge until a wide range of ethnographies of reading and writing are provided. Szwed (1981) writes that, in the field of literacy studies, ethnography "represents a considerable break with past research on the subject" and he maintains that ethnographic methods "are the only means for finding out what literacy really is and what can be validly measured" (p. 20). Similarly, Weinstein (1984) suggests that ethnographic studies of literacy are essential for coming to terms with the problems non-literate adults have learning English as a second language (p. 482). In a recent work edited by Schieffelin and Gilmore (1986), which provides an ethnographic perspective to the acquisition of literacy in schools, Smith outlines what he calls an anthropological approach to the investigation of literacy, particularly for adult non-literates. Unfortunately, few extensive ethnographies of literacy exist. The few which do exist include work by Heath (1983), Street (1984), Scribner and Cole (1981a), and more recently, work by Wagner, Messick, and Spratt (1986).

What, then are some of the essential principles which guide a qualitative methodology? Morgan and Smircich (1980) point out that

qualitative research in general "is an approach rather than a particular set of techniques" (p. 491). A qualitative methodology uses many of the same techniques of the positivist approach, but as Willis (1980) explains, it goes beyond a quantitative and positivist emphasis on factual knowledge about objects and delves into the subjective dimension of social reality (p. 92).

Hymes (1980) has written extensively on ethnographic approaches to language study to provide a research methodology for sociolinguistic inquiry. He provides a good summary of the basic principles of an ethnographic methodology. He states that ethnography gives priority "to discovery of what is actually done in local settings and of what it means to its participants" (p. xiv). The two basic principles can be restated as follows: 1) a focus on the complexities of specific local social settings with a priority placed on describing what actually takes place in those settings, 2) and an attempt to come to terms with the way in which the people in those settings interpret what occurs around them--in short, meanings. I will discuss these two principles in turn.

Local Complexities

The first principle focuses on the complexities of social situations. This principle has to do with Graff's criticism which I mentioned earlier, that linear dependent-independent variable research models do not adequately describe the complexities of social situations. Rather than extracting a number of factors to treat as causes or effects, an anthropological approach seeks instead to give detailed and comprehensive accounts of individual social contexts. According to Smith (1986), this anthropological approach applied to educational settings offers a "holism" which attempts to come to terms with "the entire range of factors interacting in a single situation" and therefore "calls attention to the complexity of forces affecting educational outcomes" (p. 262).

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973), in describing ethnography, uses the term (attributed to Gilbert Ryle) "thick description" (p. 6). This thick description involves the detailed analysis of a given setting which makes it "microscopic," rather than broad and sweeping. He writes that cultural theory, therefore, "is unseverable from the immediacies thick description presents . . . . What generality it contrives to achieve grows out of the delicacy of its distinctions, not the sweep of its abstractions" (pp. 25-26).

Another side to this emphasis on adequately rendering the complexities

of a social situation is the priority an ethnographic approach places on describing what actually takes place in everyday, local settings. I raised this issue previously as a distinctive feature of the sociolinguistic perspective. Hymes (1980) states that researchers should give priority "to discovery of what is actually done in local settings" (p. xiv). This principle distinguishes an ethnographic methodology from experimental research designs because, rather than creating a controlled environment and then introducing variables to test for their effects, an ethnographic methodology emphasizes description of an already existing environment without attempting to either manipulate variables or test already created hypotheses. The approach departs from a large scale descriptive survey method because it attempts to describe an individual setting, not as it measures up to pre-coded categories and measures validated according to pre-structured models for large populations, but in terms of its own inner logic. The fact that a qualitative methodology is not based on pre-established hypotheses or pre-coded research instruments allows for unforeseen questions and problems to emerge as part of the investigation. Willis (1982) discusses this feature of ethnography (specifically of participant observation). He writes that participant observation is a method designed not only to avoid disturbing the field but also to allow for the element of being surprised--"of reaching knowledge not prefigured in one's starting paradigm" (p. 90).

The implication is that different local settings contain their own distinct patterns, dynamics, and principles in operation that can be discovered in operation only by entering that setting. As Hymes (1980) observes of qualitative trends in social science research,

> . . . the fundamental point in common is an understanding of social life as something not given in advance and a priori, but as having an ineradicable aspect of being constituted by its participants in an ongoing, evolving way. (p. xiv)

Saville-Troike (1982) argues that, in the case of sociolinguistics, such an approach is essential because different communities use languages differently and give them their own configurations of functions. Those functions cannot be postulated ahead of time, but must be discovered on sight (p. 48). And of literacy specifically Hymes (1980) states, "One cannot make general assumptions about the role of literacy. One has to find out through ethnography what it means in the case in hand" (p. 76).

An ethnographic approach, then, attempts to render, in accurate detail, as many of the characteristics of a local social phenomenon as

possible. One of the primary strengths of a qualitative approach, as it is often argued, is the high priority it places on validity. Because a qualitative account attempts to discover patterns and categories inherent in a social phenomenon rather than predict or hypothesize them in advance, it places high priority on validly rendering the local setting it is describing. Thus, as Hymes maintains, an essential characteristic of ethnography is that it is open-ended, in order to "help overcome the limitations of the categories and understandings of human life that are part of a single civilization's partial view" (p. 92). It is therefore important that initial questions be allowed to change during the investigation so that self-correction occurs as one learns unexpected and unforeseen questions, patterns, and categories that were not known from the outside. The categories and themes to be pursued should emerge so that, as Rockhill describes it, one learns what the "significant" questions really are during the course of the investigation (1982b, p. 5).

Hymes (1980), however, points out that the open-ended nature of an ethnographic approach does not mean being "open-minded to the extent of being empty-minded." An ethnographic approach does not encourage naivete because it is essential that a researcher, upon entering the field, have a "systematic knowledge of what is known so far about the subject" (pp. 92-93). The issue, then, is not that one should enter the field with no ideas, but that the methodology must allow one to be "surprised," to be left open for revising one's own understanding of given social phenomena.

The main weakness of the qualitative approach is the flip-side of its main strength. Because of the microscopic nature of ethnographic research, even though an individual location or situation may be rendered accurately, the findings cannot be reliably generalized to a broader population. As Geertz (1973) argues, ethnographic research does not permit generalization of findings to one ethnic group or nation, let alone to humans in general (pp. 21-23).

Meanings

The second feature of an ethnographic approach is that it seeks to discover the way in which people understand, interpret, value, and perceive things. The importance of this issue stems from the assumption that it is not enough to catalogue in minute detail people's observed practices because mere description does not explain why people do what they do. Geertz (1973) argues that the thing to ask about social

phenomena is not only what their "ontological status" is, because such phenomena do have their objective reality, but also "what their import is" (p. 11). Thus, it is necessary to discuss the purposes, intentions, and reasons people have for doing things. It is for this reason that a qualitative approach attempts to deal with the subjective side of social phenomena.

The word which frequently arises in discussions of the subjective dimensions of social phenomena is "meaning." Anthropologists such as Geertz, Spradley, and Langness and Frank all consider meaning to be an essential component in any theory of culture. Geertz (1973), for example, claims to espouse what he calls a "semiotic" concept of culture. His explanation of this concept of culture provides a clear elaboration of the notion of meaning. He writes:

> Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (p. 5)

This is in keeping with Langness and Frank's (1981) belief that an anthropological view of human behaviour (what people do) must take into account the subjective reasons and meanings which guide that behaviour (p. 33). Spradley (1979) cites Blumer's aphorism that "human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them" (p. 6).

Both Schieffelin (1986) and Smith (1986) relate this issue of meaning in ethnographic research to the study of literacy. They argue that literacy must be viewed as a cultural phenomenon which is best studied from an ethnographic perspective and that such a perspective requires discovering "the meanings of phenomena (events, behaviours, artifacts) to members of a society" (Smith, p.264) and taking into account "the perspective of members of a social group, including the beliefs and values that underlie and organize their activities and utterances" (Schieffelin, p. viii).

A field known as sociology of knowledge provides some of the theoretical underpinnings for this emphasis on meaning in an ethnographic approach. Berger and Luckman (1966) in their treatise on the sociology of knowledge, explain that

> . . . the sociology of knowledge must first of all concern itself with what people "know" as "reality" in their everyday, non- or pre-theoretical lives. In other words, commonsense "knowledge"

> rather than "ideas" must be the central focus . . . . It is precisely this "knowledge" that constitutes the fabric of meanings without which no society could exist. (p. 14)

This explanation shows how closely the issue of meaning is tied to the principle I discussed earlier of the importance of focusing on what is actually done in local situations. Thus, they write,

> Since everyday life is dominated by the pragmatic motive, recipe knowledge, that is, knowledge limited to pragmatic competence in routine performances, occupies a prominent place in the social stock of knowledge. (p. 40)

According to Berger and Luckman, then, the kinds of knowledge which have the most force of "reality" for people are the everyday taken-for-granted and common-sense meanings which are structured in terms of "relevances" and determined to a large extent by pragmatic everyday needs and interests. They also argue that taken-for-granted knowledge also relates to the general situation in which people find themselves in a society (p. 42). Thus, they state that "specific agglomerations of 'reality' and 'knowledge' pertain to specific social contexts" (p. 3).

The principles I described above as being central to an ethnographic approach are related to each other in important ways. Many of the complexities of local social settings are related to the ways in which people's understandings and perceptions arise from the immediate needs they encounter and the projects they have in their everyday lives, as well as from the shared taken-for-granted knowledge and values they bring to their world. Thus, ethnographic investigation must focus on describing in detail specific social settings, the things that people actually do in those settings, and the webs of meaning which help structure those settings and practices.

DESCRIPTION OF METHODS USED

The methodology I adopted in this study follows this general ethnographic research model. However, the details of how I pursued the methodology remain to be explained. I will therefore provide details about the methods I employed to undertake this investigation. This will include an explanation of the constraints under which I worked, the way I chose informants and who they are, the data gathering techniques, and the way in which I analyzed the data.

Constraints and Pseudo-Ethnography

Although I attempted to follow the spirit of ethnographic research, my investigation cannot claim to measure up to the characteristics of a true ethnography. The data gathering procedures I used were neither

broad enough nor systematic enough to provide the kind of data required for a true "thick" description. Most works which discuss ethnographic methodology emphasize the need for participant observation over an extended period of time in the social setting in question plus the systematic collection of data through a variety of means. In addition, as Hymes (1980) maintains, ethnography is not just a matter of following techniques, but is an acquired skill which comes from rigorous training in the ethnographic tradition of research design, knowledge of the field, and interpretation of data.

This study, although it attempts on a small scale to approach these criteria, falls short in most respects. I used primarily only one kind of data gathering technique--interviews. Thus, I was not able to systematically corroborate and add to the details provided by the people I interviewed. I also did not participate to any extent in any of the domains which they described to me--with the one exception of the literacy classroom. I did occasionally accompany some of them to their homes or to an office, but not in any systematic way. Most of the information I gathered, therefore, comes from what they themselves told me about domains other than the classroom. As a result, the data I have is rich in terms of the people's explanations and accounts of practices, but not in terms of alternative forms of data gathering which would have provided detailed descriptions of practices observed in such domains as the home, at work, or while shopping. Thus, participant observation, although it occurred to some extent, was not a major source of data, with the one exception, as I mentioned, of the literacy classroom. And in terms of rigorous training, experience, and knowledge in the practice of ethnography, this study is a kind of initiation into the field--a form of training on its own--but could not be construed as a practiced and thoroughly grounded background in the field.

It is important, therefore, to clarify that this investigation, although it is based on ethnographic principles, cannot properly be called an ethnography. It does not provide systematic and corroborated descriptions an ethnography would. It does, however, point in the direction of an ethnography and, as such, could be characterized as "exploratory." It tests the ethnographic waters. Richards (1982) used a similar approach and called it illuminative description (p. 313).

There were a number of other constraints, as well, which also helped shape this study and which therefore should be made clear in order to

place the results of this study in proper perspective. An important reality of the qualitative approach is that it takes time to gain access to the field in which one is to do inquiry, to participate extensively in the field, to systematically gather data using a variety of methods, and to analyze the immense quantities of data that are generated. Thus, a full ethnographic study requires a great deal of time, work, and resources. The difficulty of finding people and getting their approval was a limiting factor, as I will explain in the section on the selection of informants. I did not allow myself sufficient time to find, establish trust, and then do extensive interviewing and participant observation with a wide range of people.

Another limiting factor I had to deal with is language. Spanish is not my mother-tongue. Although my level of Spanish comprehension is sufficient for understanding and transcribing the interviews without many problems, my lack of conversational fluency in Spanish hindered my access to a number of people who I would like to have interviewed, but who decided not to participate. I also found that my Spanish conversational skills were not adequate for effectively pursuing some of the finer distinctions of meaning, particularly with the subjunctive and conditional tenses which the final part of my interview schedule required.

One additional language constraint was in terms of analysis of the data. An ethnography, as Spradley (1979) points out, is a "translation" of one culture by another, even if a mother-tongue is shared between investigator and informants (pp. 19-20). Because I deal in this study with a different language, the translation must cover an even broader gap. Although I had little difficulty understanding most of the details described to me in Spanish, there is an entire subjective level of meanings and connotations in what people told me which I only began to apprehend. As Rabinow (1977) explains, the information provided by an informant from another culture is at best only "partial and thin" because the subjective world in which each lives is constructed differently. He writes that such investigation

> . . . is a process of intersubjective construction of liminal modes of communication. Intersubjective means literally more than one subject, but being situated neither quite here nor quite there, the subjects involved do not share a common set of assumptions, experiences, or traditions. (p. 155)

Thus, language operated as a constraint in this investigation not only

in limiting the number of people I interviewed and the kinds of information I was able to ask for, but also the level of understanding I was able to reach with the people I did interview. These constraints of method, time, and language once again demonstrate that this investigation is exploratory rather than comprehensive.

Selection of Informants

I have already begun to describe the process of finding people to interview. But I will now describe the selection process in more detail to show how this aspect of the investigation helped shape the outcomes. I will therefore explain the criteria I used to look for people to interview, the methods I used to locate them, and the problems I encountered. I will then give brief descriptions of the people I interviewed to introduce them to the reader, as well as to indicate how they fit into the criteria with which I set out.

Criteria for Selection

I decided at the outset to look for only five or six individuals to interview in depth. There were three reasons for this size of group. First, because this study was to be only exploratory and at an M.A. level, I wanted to keep the scope limited. Second, I knew that six to eight hours of in-depth interviews with each person would provide an immense quantity of data in Spanish, and I did not want to become overwhelmed with data which I would not have time in my proposed schedule to properly analyze. Third, I knew it would be difficult to locate a large sample of people in a relatively short period of time who would fit the characteristics I had set as criteria.

The criteria I used for looking for people to interview started with three primary characteristics: Spanish-speaking Latin Americans, adults, and little or no ability to read and write in their own language. It was important that they be virtually non-literate in their own language because the study was to focus on people with little facility with reading and writing in any language, not just with reading and writing in English. I recognized, however, that it would be difficult to locate people who had no facility with written language both because there are few people who cannot do at least some reading and writing, and because people with little facility with written language would either not want to identify themselves as such, or they would not be interested in talking about it to a Canadian stranger. I also soon discovered that Spanish-speaking people I talked to did not easily talk about being

non-literate (analfabeto) in Spanish, because of an enormous stigma attached to such talk.

One Ecuadorian woman told me that in her country it is not polite to talk about somebody's illiteracy. Instead, she said, one should ask about whether or not a person has had the opportunity to acquire any schooling. The problem with asking about a person's schooling is that level of schooling is only a rough indication of reading and writing facility. The people I contacted, however, seemed more ready to talk initially about schooling than about their reading and writing abilities. As it turned out, using schooling as a criterion for selection also provided me with a form of stratification in my sample which I had not anticipated. I found that the people i interviewed, all of whom would be considered as having low levels of education in Canadian society, represented a range of educational backgrounds. In addition to schooling levels, I discovered that those in my sample of low-education Hispanos varied in important ways in terms of the levels and kinds of reading and writing skills they possessed, both in English and in Spanish. These literacy skills did not necessarily parallel their levels of education. This kind of stratification reinforced the fact, as Scribner and Cole demonstrate in their study of the Vai, that literacy is not just one general set of basic skills, but a wide variety of different kinds of skills fairly specific to different uses for reading and writing. In the end, then, I adopted the criteria of looking for people with low levels of education both because informants were easier to locate using this criteria and because low-education Hispanos were more open to talking about education than about non-literacy.

Another criterion I used to guide my selection was the conscious attempt to stratify the sample along a number of lines. I wanted to include both women and men. I also wanted to include people from a variety of regions of Latin America in order to explore possible differences between regions to avoid a stereotype of Latin America as one undifferentiated cultural whole. I expected to find that the largest numbers of low-education Spanish-speaking adults living in Toronto came from Ecuador and El Salvador. The Ecuadorians, I found however, are more difficult to locate than El Salvadoreans.

I used one additional criterion. The people should have lived in Toronto long enough to be able to base their accounts on a significant amount of experience in an environment where English was the dominant

language. As it turned out, most of the Central Americans I interviewed had spent time in the United States before getting to Canada and therefore most had had extended experience of English-speaking environments.

I found, as I had expected, that it was difficult to locate low-education Hispano people. I discovered how difficult and time-consuming it is to enter the field without previous contacts and with no credentials and qualifications other than the claim to be a masters-level graduate student. The various liaison personnel and directors of immigrant and community centers and adult ESL programs provided important information and contacts, but only two such contacts in the end actually resulted in meetings with low-education, Spanish-speaking people. I discovered that there are good reasons of this. Low-education students seldom stay in ESL programs long enough to allow teachers and directors to feel comfortable about putting them in contact with strangers who want to ask questions. I also found that when teachers, social workers, and immigrant services people agreed to ask low-education Hispano they knew if they would be willing to participate in the study, the Hispanos inevitably refused--with one important exception. In the end, I met most of the people I actually interviewed through friends and personal contacts, through the programs in which I volunteered, and then through a kind of snowball effect where I followed the individuals I first contacted to other programs and then encountered other Hispanos. Three of the people in the sample already knew each other from contact in previous ESL programs.

The data I collected comes from nine people. I interviewed seven of these individuals formally, and I completed the entire interview schedule with five. Information on the two I did not formally interview comes from observation and conversations during literacy classes over a six month period with one, and one extended conversation which he preferred not to have recorded. In what follows, I will briefly introduce each of these informants in terms of pertinent background information and how they fit my criteria. I have changed their names and I will consciously attempt to remain vague about certain details in order to protect their privacy.

Angela

Angela comes from Ecuador. She came to Canada several years ago to visit her children and grandchildren and then stayed when she found that

her family was not doing well in Canada. She told the immigration officials that she refused to have her family beg and, because she was a worker, she needed a job to help get her family on their feet. She was given a letter of permission to work temporarily and has worked now for four years in kitchens and cafeterias.

Angela spent three years as a youngster in a Catholic school in Quito, Ecuador but, because her family was poor, she started work when she was still very young. Her memories of school center on the kindness of the nuns, how much she enjoyed learning about history and legends, and how the other students laughed at the holes in her shoes. She learned to read and write in Spanish mainly on her own, although her early years of schooling helped. She told me she learned because she always enjoyed looking through magazines and she enjoyed writing poetry as a teenager.

Angela has a history of entrepreneurship and community action. Over a period of thirty years of hard work in the port city of Guayaquil, she went from street vending to owning a market stall and finally to owning a restaurant. She helped organize a drive to establish a municipal market in order to get her and her companions off of the street and into an officially recognized market. She also ensured, unlike her grandparents who raised her, that all of her children received educations.

Although she is no longer a young woman, she continues to base her life on hard work. She tried to go to English classes when she first arrived, but, because she felt so uncomfortable and out of place with the way the teacher embarrassed her, she left crying and never went back. At first she lost jobs because of not knowing enough English, but because of good contacts she made at earlier jobs and by proving how well she could work in food preparation employment, she has managed to keep a cafeteria job for three years. She also runs a catering service for Ecuadorian clients out of her home.

Angela maintains that she has learned, and is continuing to learn, English on the job in a way that English classes could not have helped her. The people she works with are primarily Jamaican. They communicate with Angela through a mixture of Spanish and Jamaican English. Her daughter and the cafeteria staff help her learn enough to deal with the management and the clientele. The only reading and writing she does on the job is to label ingredients containers with Spanish names, to sign her name on delivery slips, and to read menus and recipes with which she

has become familiar over time. Thus, it can be seen that in spite of her low level of formal schooling, she performs a mixture of Spanish and English reading and writing practices to accomplish specific purposes.

María

María never had the opportunity to go to school when she was growing up in Guatemala. Her only formal schooling experience was catechism classes. Her parents, much like Angela's, separated when she was very young. As a result, she was raised by godparents and started full-time work when she was still a young girl. She asked her godparents to send her to school because she saw other children going to school, but they told her that what a person needs is an oficio (a trade) not school. She learned the oficio of matadora (a butcher). She was running her own meatcutting business by the time she came with her husband to Canada. In slow seasons, she worked at a local slaughter house. She has also been busy raising a family (her children range in age from preschool to late teens). In addition, she came to be respected in her community for her knowledge of herbal and folk remedies, and for her expertise as a midwife. Thus, although she is still young (I would guess that she is about thirty, although I did not ask her), she already has behind her a life of hard work.

María's family came to Canada as government sponsored refugees several years ago. Her husband, who completed elementary school in Guatemala, goes full-time to English classes in Toronto. Although María can identify perhaps only seven or eight letters of the alphabet in Spanish, and uses numbers at a rudimentary level, she takes care of most of the household and family business--shopping, paperwork, doctor appointments, shopping, cooking, cleaning--so that her husband will remain free to devote all of his attention to learning English. The one exception is that he takes care of anything that has to do with the children's schooling.

María says she feels restricted by her lack of reading and writing skills in Spanish because she says that, if she knew the letters in Spanish, she would have a chance to recognize the English words that would help her take care of day to day household business. She has tried to learn some English by going to ESL classes but the classes, she says, just leave her frustrated and knowing no more than if she had not gone. And yet what she claims makes her suffer more than anything else is the problems her children give her. She also resents the fact that, after

working hard all of her life, she now cannot find work which pays enough to get her family off of government assistance. Her children are bitter about Canada and cause trouble at home, in the schools, and in the streets. She can barely manage to keep the family on its feet, she says, as long as her children keep getting into trouble and causing problems for the family, and as long as she cannot find good work.

She wants more than anything to work, but meatcutting jobs are not available to non-literate, non-English speaking women, and the cleaning and factory work she can get does not pay enough to get her family off government assistance. Any other earnings she reports will be deducted from the government assistance. She therefore feels that her family problems, her household responsibilities, and her inability to find work keep her from getting ahead as she would like. Because of this, she does not have the time or the opportunity to turn her attention to learning to read and write in Spanish as she would like or to learning to speak English. That would be a luxury, she says, which is now out of reach.

Rebeca

Rebeca grew up in rural El Salvador. Her father owned a large farm which required a staff of labourers. He had not, however, seen the need to send his children to school in spite of the fact that there had been a school in the community. He learned to read and write on his own and evidently believed his children could do the same if they found the need. One of her brothers did subsequently learn to print with the help of a girl friend because he wanted to learn the construction trade. One of the maids taught Rebeca how to sign her name and to use numbers because Rebeca, as the oldest child, was required to run errands and do shopping for the farm.

Rebeca married an evangelical who had acquired a good education (some high school) and a good trade--driving tractors professionally, contracting out his services to farm and plantation owners. They moved to a city in El Salvador where they began to raise a family. Her life was abruptly changed, however, after her husband was shot one day while he was working in the countryside and she had to flee to the United States, leaving her children behind. Her family helped get her children into a boarding school and thereby managed to avoid interrupting their education. After working for five years in factories and cafeterias in Texas, she came to Canada where she could get refugee status and be reunited with her children.

Rebeca managed singlehandedly to settle her family in good housing and to get them into good schools. The fact that she could not read and write in Spanish or speak English did not keep her from successfully transferring her children to schools they like and ensuring that teachers and principals kept her informed about her children's progress. She learned to get around the city, arrange her paperwork, and do her shopping aided to some extent by her facility with numbers.

Unlike Angela and María, she has not given up on learning English in ESL classes. She has tried many programs and learned a beginner's level of oral English, but she has not been able to successfully stay in higher level ESL classes. In the meantime, through a series of tutors and a literacy class, she has learned the rudiments of reading and writing in Spanish. She still cannot progress to higher level ESL classes, however, because she can do little else than copy the letters she now recognizes because she cannot decode the English words they form. This is a vast improvement from not being able to copy anything in Spanish or in English, but not nearly enough to allow her to benefit from the higher level classes even though her oral English skills are at least at an intermediate level. Like María, Rebeca has not been successful at finding work that pays enough to support a family of four even though she had extensive cafeteria and food services work in the United States. She is also too busy keeping her household afloat to attend classes on a consistent daily basis, but unlike María, Rebeca continues to go to classes when she can.

Carlos

Carlos comes from a city in the southern cone of South America. Because he was sick as a child, he did not go to school until he was older, and then had trouble learning. He had more years of schooling than most of the other people I talked to and he copies words with very legible cursive script, but he cannot, however, read what he copies. He can decode many single syllables in Spanish but cannot unite the sounds into words. His numeracy skills, however, compared to some of the others I interviewed, are excellent. He can read numbers and perform a variety of calculations. And like the three women I discussed above, he takes care of most of the paperwork and accounts in his household.

Carlos has lived and worked in Toronto longer than all except one of the other people I interviewed. He has worked for a number of years as a janitor, working at minimum wage. He has only his mother to take care

of now, but his married siblings all live in Toronto, giving help and support that apparently provides a stable economic situation. But he feels that it is important to work and not be a burden. He wishes, however, that he could get training for a better job and get married like the rest of his family. He feels, however, that because he is a slow learner, he is kept from these aspirations. It is clear that Carlos' experience of literacy and schooling are of a different order from the experience of Angela, María, and Rebeca. This is immediately apparent when Carlos' beautiful cursive copied script is compared to the somewhat shaky print copied by María. Yet neither can read what they copy.

Juan and Pedro

Juan and Pedro are brothers. They are the youngest informants in my sample (late teens or early twenties). I interviewed them together and find it appropriate to describe them together. They were born in a remote rural part of El Salvador and grew up working the land as subsistence farmers, but, along with their mother and sisters, they fled the war in the countryside in the early 1980s. Before leaving the countryside for the city, Juan had four years and Pedro had two years of schooling in a poorly staffed and poorly equipped rural school.

Because their mother had neither the skills nor the health to bring in an income in the city, the children were required to work rather than study when they arrived in the city. Juan and Pedro left El Salvador several years ago on their own and spent one year in an American city living with a host family and attending an ESL program where they learned some basic oral English, and some written English. Juan can now read with basic comprehension and write extended prose in Spanish as well as to a lesser extent in English. Pedro, however, who did not learn to read and write well in Spanish has much less facility than his brother with both Spanish and English reading and writing. Pedro also has difficulty with numbers.

Both brothers have jobs and do not receive government assistance. Juan works in a factory and Pedro works for a health office. They are waiting for lawyers to do the paperwork which will get them the permission they need to stay in Canada. They fear, however, that they will have to leave Canada and look for another country to live in, which could be any other country except their own, they say, because it is too dangerous for them to return home. They cannot qualify for government sponsored ESL and job training programs until they get landed immigrant

status. They must therefore make a living while they wait and try to improve their English in what they consider to be second-rate ESL courses which are available to them. It is difficult to learn English in Toronto, they say, because they are often too tired after work to go to night classes, especially when the night classes are lax and poorly taught compared to the challenging and well run ESL program they attended in the United States where they feel they learned most of the English they now know. They place their hope on two things--getting landed immigrant status and then learning English in order to get into job training programs which would open up doors to better jobs.

Doña Ana

Ana was born in a remote rural area of Venezuela near the beginning of this century. After years of working on large plantations, she left her husband to move to a city in order to get her five children into schools. She spent many years selling food, cleaning bank offices, and later selling cosmetics to support her children as they went to school. Her eldest son and daughter later helped to bring up and support the younger ones through university educations.

Ana never went to school and did not learn to read and write on her own. Her children always did well in school, she said, and so she never had reason to bother about school. She learned to use numbers reasonably well, she told me, only after she moved to the bigger cities.

Ana came to Canada to live with her son--a university student. She will return to her family in Venezuela when her son finishes his studies. Because her son has been at two universities, she has lived in both Montreal and Toronto. In Montreal, Ana went to French classes and learned some basic conversational French because, she said, the teacher was very patient and drilled her on what to say. A Spanish-speaking friend she met at the French classes helped her learn to read at an elementary level in Spanish. When she moved to Toronto, however, she was not able to find an English class which would help her learn English the same way she learned French, but she found a recently formed literacy class which helped her with her Spanish reading and writing.

Ana, like María and Rebeca, effectively manages to get around and accomplish her daily round of tasks in Toronto in spite of her limited Spanish literacy skills and English oral skills. She knows her way around Montreal and Toronto and in general is able to participate in most of the activities which matter to her. Her difficulty locating an ESL

class which will help her learn oral English is one of the few things she regrets.

Lucía

I will mention Lucía only briefly. I did not interview her in depth because Spanish is not her mother tongue. Her situation provides an important case in point for this study because she operates in three languages--Italian, Spanish, and English--and yet is literate in none of them. I conversed with her and observed her in a literacy class over a six month period. She was born in Italy, spent many years in Argentina, and has lived now for many years in Canada. She never went to school, and has worked all of her life. She now has a passion to learn to read and write in Spanish, partly because she attends a Spanish Protestant church and would like to read the Spanish Bible, and partly because she has not found an Italian literacy class.

Lucía has learned some oral English in ESL classes she attended. Her English comprehension is quite good. But her inability to read and write in any of the languages she knows contributed to making English classes embarrassing and bitter experiences. She recounts how she has been driven to tears and frustration after being separated from other students because she took too much of the teacher's time. Like Rebeca, she could not get into higher level ESL classes because she could not read and write.

Manuel

I will mention Manuel only briefly as well because, when I spoke with him, he was reluctant to participate in on-going interviews, but he spoke for two hours in the one, unrecorded conversation I had with him. He does not have legal status and therefore prefers to keep a low profile. He came to Canada because his brother-in-law lives here. He has worked as a restaurant dishwasher for six years and is waiting for the paperwork to come through which will give him legal status. Then he plans to start attending English classes and later to take training courses in order to get better employment.

Manuel comes from a rural part of Central America. He attended school for only one or two months as a child. He learned to read and write, however, he told me, because his family is evangelical and they always read the Bible at home. The primary reading activity he engages in still is Bible reading. He also regularly writes letters to his mother who lives in Central America. He told me that he has not needed to read and

write in English yet in Toronto because he does not need to do any reading or writing at work, he eats his meals at the restaurant and therefore does very little shopping, and he can find his way around the city by using maps and street signs which his Spanish literacy helps him decipher.

Overview of the Sample

These nine people, then, make up my sample. They meet most of the criteria I established for the study. They are all Spanish-speaking adults from Latin America. Lucía is the one person who does not quite fit this description only because Spanish is not her mother tongue. All have lived for over a year in English-speaking settings. I did not find many people with virtually no literacy skills. Only Ana, Rebeca, María, and Lucía satisfy this criteria. But the criteria of low education is satisfied by all of the individuals with the exception perhaps of Juan, who had four years of education plus English training which has resulted in Spanish and English reading and writing skills much superior to the rest of the people in the sample.

Level of education raises the issue of stratification in the sample. The people I found to interview have provided a sample which is stratified in many more ways than I anticipated at the outset. Level of schooling is one level of stratification, but kinds of reading and writing skills provide an entirely different kind of stratification because someone with virtually no schooling like Manuel is quite literate in Spanish, and yet someone like Carlos, with quite a few years of schooling, cannot read. Pedro can read and write to some degree in both English and Spanish, but he has poor numeracy skills, yet Carlos, who can read virtually no Spanish or English, has good numeracy skills.

There are other forms of stratification which I did not foresee. These include age and social circumstances. The people range in age from early twenties to middle seventies. Some have children at home but others do not have children to support. Some have jobs, and others do not. Some have landed immigrant status and others have various forms of status, from visitor and illegal to private and government sponsored refugee status, all of which affect the life situation of the individuals. Some have significant experience of large cities, others come from very rural settings, and some have many years of experience in both rural and urban settings. What emerges, then, is a group of people from a range of distinct past and present situations and ability levels

lumped together under the rubric of low-education, minority-language adults. A theme which will continue to emerge is that there are perhaps more differences than similarities between these individuals.

Data Gathering

The process of data gathering, as I mentioned previously, mainly involved conducting in-depth interviews with the informants I described above. In the discussion which follows, I will describe in more detail the kinds of data I was looking for, how I structured the interviews, and my approach to corroborating my findings.

Data Required

The data which I was looking for was primarily of a sociolinguistic nature. Unlike Rockhill's general life-history approach, I probed specifically for the functions of written language in the everyday lives (past and present) of the people in my sample. By functions, I mean a variety of dimensions at which written language operates in everyday situations. The most obvious dimension could be called the artifacts of writing and includes the kinds of written language which are found from day to day in a person's environment. Another dimension could be called the writing behaviours of people and includes the practices people engage in in relation to written language they encounter in their everyday lives. Wagner, Messick, and Spratt (1986) refer to these practices as "literacy events," which they describe as follows:

> [A]ny activity which involves one or more of the following: reading . . . ; writing . . . ; manipulation of written materials or books with the intent to use them for some purpose; or any observed behavior or discussion that makes reference to reading, writing, or other activities in the material culture of literacy. (p. 240)

These "literacy events" can be described empirically.

Investigation of the empirical features of a social context begins to merge with investigation of subjective features, however, at the level of language practices because people's practices include both observable behaviour and the less apparent intentions and set of values operating within the practices. Another step further into the subjective features of a social context is the issue of uses people have for written language, whether or not they can personally realize those uses. This begins to open up the area of understandings, values, and ways of perceiving written language. All of these issues enter into my use of the term <u>functions</u> of written language. They take into account the two general facets important to ethnographic research--the events, practices,

and artifacts in a given social setting, plus the web of meanings which surround those empirical realities.

In order to get at these various levels of the functions of written language in people's everyday lives, I therefore planned to collect the following data:

> Domains: a description of the various literacy environments or domains people encounter regularly
>
> Practices: the practices people engage in related to the written language in these everyday domains
>
> Uses: the uses they have for reading and writing in English and in Spanish
>
> Perceptions: perceptions, ways of understanding, feelings, and opinions about the role (actual and potential) of reading and writing in both Spanish and English in their everyday lives

Interview Structure

After determining what data I intended to collect, I was able to design data gathering methods--in this case, interviews. I opted for this means of gathering data because it would give me both an indication of the objective data (kinds of written language and written language related practices that people would report) as well as the subjective data (people's understandings and perceptions of reading and writing). To avoid structuring the interviews too rigidly, however, I planned an approach which loosely follows Spradley's (1979) suggestion for starting ethnographic interviews with "grand tour" questions and later narrowing down to "mini tour" questions on the issues raised by the more general or global questions. In this way, the informants' perspectives or ways of seeing are given precedence over the investigator's own categories, expectations, and intentions.

As can be seen in the interview schedule I developed (see appendix 1), I developed a set of guiding questions which progresses from a very general description of the domains and schedules that make up people's everyday lives, to a description of the written language practices which take place in those domains and schedules, and finally to questions about written-language related needs, uses, and desires. But, rather than rigidly follow this schedule, I attempted to use the questions only as a general guideline. I translated the questions into Spanish with the help of several individuals whose mother tongue is Spanish in order to have well constructed questions to use as models when I needed to refer

to them.

I attempted to gear the interviews toward a conversational dialogue about life experiences, relating the conversation specifically to the issue of written language. I therefore started by asking each person I interviewed to describe in detail the places they came from and the places they had lived before coming to Toronto. This was done not only to encourage them to tell about their experiences in their own words and thus keep the interview open-ended, but to also provide background information because to ask only about their experience with written language since arriving in Toronto would be to overlook the way in which they had become socialized into needs and uses for written language.

The progression in the interviews, then, was from the empirical to the subjective, from the general to the specific, and also from the past to the present. The first two progressions occurred for each place the person had lived, and the third progression occurred over the course of the interviews with each person.

The way in which these progressions operated can be appreciated better in terms of the actual data gathering instruments I used and the format I followed. I conducted a series of interviews with each person who agreed to participate. Depending on their schedules and preferences, the interviews were as short as forty-five minutes each (which resulted in as many as six interviews), or as long as three hours each (as few as two interviews). There were only two interviews which I did not tape record because two individuals were at first wary about taped interviews. I also used three other data collecting devices--map drawing, time lines, and an interview chart (see appendix two). I used the map drawing and time lines as a way of discovering the domains which make up the people's lives. I asked the informant to help me draw a map of each of the places they had lived for extended periods of time as well as a timeline of regular activities they would have engaged in on typical days for several different days of the week and for different seasons in the year based on how they divided the week and the year. This stragegy allowed me to develop a relatively comprehensive list of "domains" for each person. In the next interview I could then probe for the uses of language, domain by domain, by filling in interview charts for each domain and by following the schedule of questions as a general guideline.

For each place they had lived, then, I would follow this cycle. I used the interview charts to list what written material appeared or what

"literacy events" would take place in a given domain and who would read and write what for what purposes (the actors and the functions). I then focused on the individuals I was interviewing to discover how they themselves interacted with written language. I asked them what problems they encountered from not being able to read and write in each domain and how they solved these problems. Also, for the domains in which they experienced problems with reading and writing, I asked what they would want to read and write in each domain if they were able to.

One additional type of question I asked for each domain had to do with what languages were involved in the reading and writing practices and materials they described for me. Only in their descriptions of life in North America did they begin to distinguish between languages, but because I did not assume that written language occurred only in Spanish in their lives in Latin America, I did not restrict my questions about different languages only to their North American experience. None of the people I interviewed, however, had experience of other written languages, either foreign or aboriginal, in their home countries.

There is a tension in my interview approach between open-endedness and structure. Because I had a specific idea of the kinds of data I wanted, because I wanted to limit the time spent in data collection, and because I only intended to do exploratory rather than exhaustive investigation, I followed the interview chart closely after the initial periods of general discussions about the maps and timelines we created. I, however, followed the lists of domains, practices, and uses generated by my informants and avoided as often as possible asking leading questions. In other words, I asked, "Does anybody do any writing of any kind in the living room?" rather than "Does your husband write letters or balance his bank book in the living room?" Only after they provided specific details did I ask questions about the details. Only on occasion did I need to use specific examples to illustrate what I meant.

I structured the interviews I conducted, then, around a set of progressions to allow me to systematically probe for details about the uses of written language. But I also attempted to keep the interviews open-ended enough to let the informants experiences of, and perceptions about, written language provide the categories for the domains, uses, practices, and kinds of written language. In the next section, I will turn to a discussion of the steps I took to fill in gaps in the data and to cross check the accuracy of my understandings of people's accounts of

written language in their lives.

Data Corroboration

Willis (1980) states that qualitative research needs to have a method "which respects evidence, seeks corroboration and minimizes distortion" (p. 91). I took a number of steps to attempt to ensure accuracy and minimize distortion. But two qualifications need to be mentioned. First, it is important to understand that this investigation was not designed to be exhaustive. I did not set out to provide, nor have I succeeded in providing, a thorough investigation of the uses low-education Hispanos have for written language. The objective of the study, as I have pointed out already, is to do no more than explore the field in order to suggest the importance of taking language use realities into account in designing basic education programs for minority-language adults.

The second qualification has to do with the validity of my informants' understanding of reality. In this investigation the issue of validity has more to do with how accurately I describe the informants' points of view than with how accurately their own accounts describe reality. Richards (1982) says of his "illuminative" approach to evaluating programs that "the description should first be expressed in the language of the participants themselves." He, therefore, suggests that checking the description--or using triangulation procedures--in order to improve the accuracy of the total picture in the end is important but secondary (p. 313). In this vein, what is central to this investigation is how the people I interviewed perceive the functions of written language, not the validity or appropriateness of those perceptions. I, therefore, did not take major steps to determine how accurately they described various domains and the reading and writing practices which occurred in those domains.

However, I did consciously use a number of methods to improve the accuracy of my findings. I spent many hours, for example, tutoring four of the people I interviewed and, in the process, listening to stories and details which did not come out in the interviews. I recorded this additional data in field notes that I kept throughout the investigation when important details emerged outside of the interviews. I also noted questions I had when I transcribed the interviews and worked with the data in order to ask for clarification in subsequent interviews. Finally, I usually asked several questions at the end of each set of

interviews about what a hypothetical Hispano who had little or no Spanish reading and writing ability and little English language proficiency would need to do to manage in Toronto. This approach provided some corroborating information, but it was a cumbersome strategy because many of those in my sample seemed to find such questions difficult to respond to and I found it difficult explaining the purpose of the questions while avoiding non-leading examples.

In short, then, in order to improve the accuracy of the data, I attempted to systematically clarify what I did not understand by asking for clarification in subsequent interviews. I also kept field notes to record new details provided by the people I tutored, and I attempted to ask a kind of hypothetical question directly geared towards triangulation. Although all three methods provided some corroboration, the first two methods were more effective than the last.

Analysis of the Data

There were three stages to the analysis of the data. The first stage occurred during the process of conducting the interviews. As I explained above, the maps and time lines I developed with the help of my informants and the interview charts I filled in during the interviews generated the categories of domains, practices, and uses which I needed for structuring subsequent interviews. I later discovered that Wagner, Messick, and Spratt (1986) had used a somewhat similar model for describing different locations which make up people's everyday lives and I subsequently adopted their term domain to describe these locations because the word domain seems to capture the social factors that are part of a setting in which literacy takes place better than either of the words location or context. Thus, in this first stage, I was already placing into categories the domains of life, the kinds of reading and writing encountered in those domains, and the practices people engaged in to deal with that reading and writing. These categories are explained in the following chapter.

My second stage of data analysis involved reading through the transcripts and interview charts in order to search for patterns in the kinds of written language, the languages used, and the practices non-literates use to deal with written language. The categories emerged clearly enough to require little coding or breaking down of concepts into elaborate hierarchies (such as Bliss and Ogborn, 1983, or Lofland and Lofland, 1984, suggest) in order to discover underlying patterns. I did

some coding when it came to interpreting people's values and understandings about the uses of reading and writing. For example, I began to notice the frequency with which my informants talked about not knowing anything in comparison to those who had gone to school, about being associated with Indians or rural people who have no culture, about speaking bad Spanish. These comments, sprinkled throughout the interviews, emerged as a theme. I comment on other themes which emereged in a similar way in the next two chapters on findings.

The third stage of analysis proved to be more difficult. This stage occurred when I began to write the initial drafts of the findings and literature review sections of this thesis. In the process of attempting to develop a description of the data, I gained new insights which in turn influenced the structure of the discussion that appears in chapters 3 and 4. I found, for example, that I needed to distinquish between actual reading/writing practices and other literacy events that were also ways of interacting with written language. Non-literates and semi-literates, regardless of their personal inabilities to read and write well, nevertheless interact with written language through a variety of strategies which range from having a network of scribes to memorizing the format of a specific kind of writing that they frequently encounter. I also developed a clearer formulation of a definition of <u>functions</u> for the purposes of this study in the process of having to distinguish the uses the informants attribute to written language on the one hand from the negative ways in which they experience their illiteracy on the other. Dealing with the literature in chapter 5 also provided me with new insights, such as the many dimensions in everyday life at which literacy operates, as well as the ideological nature of literacy functions. Some of the schemes of categorization I developed in the analysis of the data, then, did not emerge clearly until I was beginning to describe the data in chapters 3 and 4, and attempting to deal with the literature in chapter 5. These schemes which ultimately emerged form the structure of the next four chapters.

Investigator Bias

One topic, investigator bias, remains to be discussed in this chapter. It flows out of the discussion above about the analysis of the data because it contributes to the way in which my interpretation in the end took shape. The structure I brought to the interviews and the kinds of questions and forms of interaction I used inevitably influenced the

accounts provided by the people I interviewed.

This problem is raised in most discussions of qualitative approaches to research. Rabinow (1977), for example, says that two factors must be recognized in anthropological analysis:

> [F]irst, that we ourselves are historically situated through the questions we ask and the manner in which we seek to understand and experience the world and second, that what we receive from our informants are interpretations, equally mediated by history and culture. Consequently, data we collect is doubly mediated, first by our own presence and then by the second-order self-reflection we demand from our informants. (p. 119)

Hymes (1980) states that "there is no way to avoid the fact that the ethnographer himself or herself is a factor in the inquiry." He also states, "Since partiality cannot be avoided, the only solution is to own up to it, to compensate for it as much as possible, to allow for it in the interpretation" (p. 99).

This is why it is important to provide, as part of the background information of an investigation of this nature, a description of the investigator's point of view. This allows the reader to interpret the results of an investigation in terms of the investigator's biases. I will therefore explain the reasons for my interest in this investigation and the factors which have influenced my way of thinking in this study.

My stance in this investigation has to do with both my formal training and professional experience as well as with my personal background. I have been trained and had experience in teaching ESL. My interest in a view of language and of language learning that focuses on the uses of language arises from my academic and professional experience in ESL, particularly from the communicative language learning perspective to which I referred in the first chapter.

My interest in language policy for educational programs, however, has more to do with personal interests. I spent a number of years in South America and had close contact with the Chimborazo Quichua[1] people (a Native peasant community) who have experienced cultural, economic, social, and political domination by a colonial culture. Language issues that have been raised due to expanding national public education systems are only one manifestation of assimilationist and cultural homogenization

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[1]This is not a spelling mistake. The people call themselves Quichua, not Quechua, because the Spanish "e" sound does not exist in their language.

pressures that the various Ecuadorian Native groups have had to deal with (see Muratorio, 1981, and Stutzman, 1981, and for a similar account from Mexico, see Hamel, 1984, and Coronado, et al., 1984). The Ecuadorian government officially promotes Native languages as having importance related to cultural and national identity, but the languages are taken seriously only for their folkloric rather than everyday-use value. Legal, government, and to a large extent economic and educational activities occur almost exclusively in Spanish in spite of the fact that a significant proportion of the population speaks various dialects of Quichua as a first language.

This Ecuadorian experience has sparked my interest in the discrepancy between an official multicultural policy and the actual sociocultural practices and structures in which languages acquire different uses and meanings for different groups of people. I also saw in Ecuador the way exclusion can be structured into literacy-based, dominant language practices in the market places, government and law offices, schools, and churches. As a result, I have become interested in the relation that language practices in educational programs have to the social, political, and economic development of minority ethnic groups.

CONCLUSION

The methodology used in this study, then, in the most general sense would fit into a qualitative approach category. I based the methodology on principles derived from ethnographic methodologies, which stress the complexities of local social settings and the webs of shared meaning which help structure those settings. The actual methodology could not be considered true ethnography, however, because the limited scope of this investigation provides neither the range of data gathering methods nor the breadth of description required in the anthropological tradition. The methodology in a more specific sense is sociolinguistic because it focuses on language use in social settings.

The primary data gathering technique I used was interviewing--systematic and in-depth interviewing. I structured the interviews around domains and functions of written language in the everyday lives of the nine people I selected. I also kept field notes to record additional data that emerged during tutoring sessions. The data I gathered as a result of using this methodology and the ways in which I analyzed it are described and interpreted in the next three chapters.

CHAPTER 3--FINDINGS: LITERACY DOMAINS

I began the series of conversations I had with each person I interviewed by making a list of the different locations they go to plus the routine activities they engage in on a day to day basis. I used the resulting lists of routine places and activities as the framework for exploring how written language enters into their lives. I will structure my findings in a similar way by using the location by location framework to describe the reading, writing, and written language my informants encounter in the various places and activities they identified. The description of each location or domain is structured to contain similar kinds of details in order to provide a consistent initial level of analysis. To provide a degree of consistent language analysis, for example, I specify which language or languages are involved in each situation, as well as which literacy phenomena are involved--both the practices (kinds of reading and kinds of writing) and the products (kinds of written language). In addition, although I focus on each person's present experience of Toronto, I often include their experience before they came to Canada in order to give added depth to the descriptions by providing a sense of the continuities and changes over time in each individual's life, and to provide additional data for comparison and contrast. It should be noted, however, that my objective is not to comprehensively catalogue what makes up a given literacy environment. Broad strokes are sufficient because my focus in the end is on how my informants interact with and interpret that environment. This chapter, therefore, sets the background. In the next chapter, I will focus more on the individuals themselves by considering what their statements and practices reveal about the uses and functions reading and writing have for them.

Because the home is the base from which my informants tend to operate, I use it as the starting point, and then branch out to other places where the people I talked to go in their day to day activities. The categories I will use to describe these domains are as follows: The Home, The City, Offices, Schools, The Workplace, and The Church.

THE HOME

Food Preparation

A home-based activity where I expected written language to have an important function is food preparation because not only does shopping in North America require the ability to identify a wide variety of packaged food not normally available in Latin America, but cooking the food also

often requires following written instructions. I was wrong. The women I interviewed usually prepare ethnic dishes in their own kitchens without written recipes in much the same way they did in their home countries. Doña Ana told me that she cooks according to her way, the Venezuelan way, so she has no need of a cookbook. She reported that she cooks as she always has, with simple ingredients such as onions and garlic, and that she prefers to buy only fresh produce. Angela, although she can read and write in Spanish, similarly told me:

> In my house in the kitchen I don't use [written recipes], no, because I have my customs. I buy garlic that needs to be peeled. I prepare things according to my way of doing things. I don't need to read packages. I buy and we eat our own kinds of food at my house.

María described how she cooks in the following way,

> Most of the time I . . . I don't read. I don't use cookbooks. I cook purely from memory. In the kitchen, as I told you once already, most of the time I know what I'm doing. I hardly ever use packages or cans because I make fresh vegetables for them. But I know what to use because--from the smells of things--and that is how I know. It is not difficult for me. But I can't read. In that way I can't manage in a kitchen, unless it is my kitchen, where I know what I have.

The women reported that they did occasionally try to follow instructions on packages or follow written recipes, but not as a regular part of their everyday cooking. María told me that she occasionally buys a can of soup or <u>alguna comida ya preparada</u> (some kind of already prepared food) just to try it. She gave the following example:

> There are little boxes of prepared fish, there is only to cook it. That is when I need someone to read for me how I should cook it, fried or baked. Sometimes, when there is no one to read for me, I just either fry or bake it . . . . But, on the contrary, when they read for me, how one should cook it, that's how I do it. But it is only once in a while when I need my husband to read something like that. It's better to just not cook those things. I don't make those things because I don't know the measures. I don't know how much it takes. It's just better not to cook them . . . . Only occasionally, because I hardly ever cook these other things.

Doña Ana described how, when she lived in Caracas, she learned several recipes from her daughters:

> The cookbook we kept in the kitchen because my daughters were getting older. They used it, and still do. I never did . . . memory, from memory, and that's how I still cook everything. To make cakes, and so forth, I now know the measurements for how to make them. Yes, I asked my daughters to teach me. That was there. I would ask, "My daughter, how do you make this?" and they would tell me and I would make it. And from there I knew it by memory. Now I can mark down numbers and measurements, but in Maracaibo I

couldn't do that, nor in Caracas. I learned in Montreal.

Rebeca described a similar way of learning recipes:

> I prepared the food because my mother had taught me how to cook. I knew what I needed to put in every dish. So, I didn't have the need for a cookbook, and because I couldn't read, a recipe book would have been of no use. In the kitchen, when I didn't understand something, I asked for help. And I took care to memorize it because I wasn't about to be constantly going looking for help . . . . I learned recipes by memory. I didn't always do it exactly as it should be done. Sometimes I added too much or too little . . . . Packages would explain how to make dishes, and I would ask, when my husband or a girl friend would arrive, I would ask them the first times I needed to make something, "How many teaspoons should I add?" Then they would tell me and I didn't forget.

Rebeca and Doña Ana sometimes have friends copy down recipes in Spanish because they can now usually decode the ingredient list for new cakes or muffins they have been learning to make in Canada. But these written recipes are not essential to cooking, as suggested by the following incident. At a Spanish literacy class, Rebeca shared a carrot cake recipe with Doña Ana and the literacy teacher copied it down for her, including drawings. But Doña Ana lost these instructions and so proceeded to prepare it mainly from memory.

To summarize, then, the way the women reported occasionally using written language in food preparation includes the use of recipes and instructions in both English and Spanish. Following instructions on store-bought packages involves depending on spouses, children, or friends to translate the written English text into spoken Spanish. The written recipes, however, that Rebeca and Doña Ana exchange are in Spanish. The exchange requires copying in Spanish, either one's self or by a scribe, and then deciphering it at home. Although both English and Spanish written language is included in these practices, however, reading and writing in either language for food preparation is more the exception than the rule.

Correspondence

All of my informants identified letter writing and reading--communicating with family and friends in other parts of the world--as one of the main literacy practices in the home. Angela knows how to write in Spanish, yet letter writing is virtually the only writing activity she engages in at home, apart from once a month doing accounts for the home catering she does for an Ecuadorian club. Although Carlos has lived in Toronto now for six years, and all of his immediate family lives here as well, he continues to ask family members to read the

letters from relatives and friends to him. María, who had the fewest literacy skills of all those in my sample, described the volume of correspondence she receives from Central America:

> The letters that come tell me about many things in Guatemala. I find out about my family, and about my in laws. [The letters] come regularly, sometimes as many as three each week, other times one each week, from different family. All that come I answer, and I answer, and I answer. Because of that, some of them write to me regularly. They also come from my friends.

She has a large network of friends and family she left behind in Guatemala who confide in her and seek her counsel. Because of the volume of letter writing that she needs to have done for her, she gets tired of always having to ask her husband to answer these letters for her. Her children write to their own friends, but they do not like to write letters for her because their writing, they say, is not yet legible enough for the friends and relatives with whom she corresponds.

The situation at Rebeca's house is somewhat similar. She told me about the letters she and her children exchange with her non-literate mother and semi-literate brothers as follows:

> When we receive letters from my mother in El Salvador, all four of my children read them because they want to know what their grandmother has to say to them. All four know how to read and write in Spanish. . . . yesterday my daughter wrote a letter for me to my mother, but I need two more for my brothers (one in El Salvador and one in the U. S.).

One topic which emerged over and over again in conversations about letter reading and writing was the concern the people I interviewed expressed about not knowing Spanish letter writing conventions. The kind of script, for example, as well as the level of penmanship are important to them. Letters are to be written, for example, in cursive script--what they call <u>letra corrida</u> (run-together lettering), or <u>letra de carta</u> (letterwriting lettering). With the help of the literacy teacher, Rebeca sometimes prints short letters to relatives. But she usually has her daughter write most of her letters for her because

> the younger ones do not write their letters [of the alphabet] nicely, and I want it, when I send a letter, to be easy to read. If someone there who has had little education is going to read it [when it is messy], they won't be able to follow it.

Doña Ana and Rebeca, however, are able to read Spanish at a basic level only if the writing is in printed script. Because most of the correspondence they receive is written in cursive script, Rebeca and Doña Ana must still wait, like those who have no reading abilities in Spanish,

for others to come and read for them.

Rebeca identified an additional Spanish letter writing skill which she lacks--the conventional letter writing expressions. In El Salvador, she always told her friend who wrote letters for her "to start it for me because I didn't know how to express myself." Pedro mentioned a similar deficiency in his English letter-writing. He told me (in Spanish),

> I can write some [in English], such as "I am writing this letter to you." But I don't know how to write in such a way where I would be able to say [with elevated English language] "It was a pleasure to have received your letter." I am not able to write like that.

Pedro also identified spelling as a skill he lacks which makes letter writing in Spanish difficult. He said, "With writing, I sometimes have problems because, as you know, there are letters [in Spanish writing] that you don't pronounce--they are silent." He gave as examples not only the silent h, and the silent u which follows q and g in front of the i and e vowels, but also the s and the d as well, which in his dialect are often dropped.

Another fact which became clear in the conversations about correspondence is that letter writing and reading take place almost exclusively in Spanish. Even Lucía, whose mother tongue is Italian, asked the literacy teacher to help her write a Spanish letter to Italian relatives in Montreal because they read Spanish. Only Juan and Pedro mentioned occasionally exchanging letters in English with friends in the United States in addition to the Spanish letters they regularly exchange with family in Central America.

Only Juan, Angela, and Manuel read and write well enough in Spanish to read and write Spanish letters without the help of others. Pedro sometimes needs his brother's help to read both the Spanish letters from home and the English letters from the U. S. He is able to write a few words on the English letters, but Juan points out that, although they can both now understand much of the English they read, writing is more difficult. He says of the English letters,

> "But, obviously, we don't write very much, understand? We aren't going to write a long letter--only a few words. It's that we have much more to learn. But they will understand, because they know the situation. And we can always use Spanish because [the American friends] understand Spanish."

Reading and writing letters, then, unlike the use of instructions and recipes for food preparation, are frequent home-oriented literacy practices. But they occur almost exclusively in Spanish. Letter writing

and reading include not only the use of cursive script, but also require the ability to use conventional letter-writing phrases and conventions. Those without sufficient letter writing skills (including the kind of lettering and expressions conventional to letter writing in Spanish) to read and write letters on their own manage to engage in a constant cycle of letter exchange anyway by depending on others to read and write for them.

Household Business

The mail which the people I interviewed receive also contains bills and other bureaucratic forms. This kind of mail, however, is unlike the more personal mail they receive in a number of respects. Although some of it is in Spanish, most is in English. Carlos, for example, lists the bills which arrive at his house: the telephone and hydro bills in English, and the Spanish cable television in Spanish. Also, few of those I talked to depend on other family members to manage the bills the way they depend on others to read and write letters for them. María, the person with the lowest level of reading and writing skills of those I interviewed, takes charge of most of the household business herself in order to free up her husband and children for their studies. The bills arrive, for instance, for the airfare they must pay back to the government, for OHIP premiums, for the rent, and for the telephone. She says,

> I have to find out about these bills. I take them to my brother-in-law and he explains them . . . For the telephone bill, I now know which card it is, and I go to the bank and I pay it. I can read the numbers on it and I know how much they have to charge me.

I was surprised at the amount of house-hold business María can manage with almost no literacy skills even in Spanish, and only limited numeracy skills. I discovered in one interview, that she had difficulty accurately identifying and writing down many two digit numbers in Spanish. She identified the number 13, for example, as <u>treinta</u> (thirty) rather than as <u>trece</u> (thirteen).

Carlos described how he takes responsibility for the bills, but still seeks help:

> I know how to do figures. One has to use cheques. I sign them because I'm the one who manages the money. I pay the rent, and all of that, right? But these bills that arrive in the mail, I get help with them--with the quantity. I can't read English . . . . Now my brother does it for me [reads the English and fills in the written part of the cheques], right? But to sign them, I sign them.

Doña Ana's sons have always paid the bills in her house, but she oversees the business by placing the bills on their desks and ensuring that they notice them. In Caracas, for example,

> . . . the bills came, the invoices came. I put them--when the telephone bill came, I put it under the telephone. Then my children would come home. I would say to my oldest boy, "The telephone bill came" or "The light bill came." When the apartment bill came, I placed it under their desk pad, and I would say, "Son, the apartment bill came."

In Toronto, she places the bills that arrive by mail on her son's desk and "he takes care of them when he gets in."

Rebeca also oversees the paying of bills. She told me that she is the one who buys the money orders to pay them:

> I tell [my daughter], "Come and fill in these three," because right now there are three money orders that I buy when I change the cheque because one for the books--the encyclopedia--another for the airfare, and the other for the rent. She fills them out for me.

Juan and Pedro take care of cobros (charges) without help from others. Juan told me that both he and his brother know how to write cheques, because sometimes it is necessary to pay by cheque. But Pedro added that they seldom use cheques, "We always pay cash." It is somewhat ironic that Angela, who is literate in Spanish, depends on one of her married daughters to manage the bills because, she says, "I hardly have the time, and without the language, I'm not able to manage in that area. So she is the one who takes that on and I stay at home to look after the children."

Somewhat similar to bills, but which require writing in English, are forms and applications which arrive by mail from various bureaucracies. For example, Juan told me that both he and his brother can fill out applications in English, but then he described the trouble he had filling out welfare tickets which arrive by mail:

> J: We could read them. There was less that we couldn't read than what we could . . . . It's necessary to fill out the tickets, and that is difficult. When you just say "nil, nil, nil, nil" . . . . What does 'nil' mean?
>
> C: It means zero, or nothing.
>
> J: Ah. So then it's not difficult. But once you start to work, then you have to itemize everything. That's more difficult because it asks for everything, fact by fact. Then it's more difficult, do you understand? . . . They returned two to me that weren't filled out properly. Then I went to ask for help.

During the course of my contact with my informants, I encountered two

other examples of forms which my informants attempted unsuccessfully to fill out at home before coming to me for help. María asked me to help her with an income declaration form so that she could collect wages for a short period of work she had done for a cleaning company. Rebeca asked me to fill out the federal census form which her son had not managed to understand.

Mail promotions, advertisements, and flyers also arrive with the mail. According to Rebeca, a large proportion of the papers "which fall" through the mail slot are advertisements. She says that "they arrive in English, and they arrive in Spanish too." María told me that, although their English is not very good, her children particularly enjoy trying to read the advertising "magazines" that advertise toys.

The flyers, bills, and other paper which come with the mail are for the most part in English. María, however, raised an important language issue when she told me that it is sufficient to know how to read in Spanish in order to deletrear (decipher) English words because the letters are basically the same in both English and Spanish. She has seen how non-English speaking Spanish literates can decipher, for their purposes, many English words. Carlos and María both commented that they can read the bills because they come to recognize the bills and can read numbers, which are the same in Spanish or English.

In sum, then, the bureaucratic mail which arrives can often be managed by the Hispanos I interviewed. They can oversee this household business without being able to read and write in Spanish or in English. The bills can often be deciphered without a knowledge of English if they are bills that come regularly. It is the infrequent bills and notices, such as an unexpected OHIP bill María received, as well as the advertisements which require some English reading ability. Forms that arrive by mail pose the most difficulty because they require English writing skills as well. But, once again, the people I spoke to had people to turn to for help with these forms.

Print Media

Most of the homes contain both English and Spanish magazines and newspapers in the living rooms. This print-media ranges from Toronto papers and tabloids that come in both English and Spanish, to Spanish newspapers and magazines from the home countries, and Spanish publications from home embassies.

Doña Ana told me that, when she lived in Venezuela, her children would

always read the newspapers to her. They would tell her, "Such and such happened, Mother, in such and such a place." Occasionally they would bring magazines home, but the newspaper was always "essential." Here in Canada, she told me, her son reads English, French, and Spanish newspapers and magazines, but because he rarely has time to read to her now, she rarely uses newspapers here.

María told me that her children and husband attempt to deletrear the English newspapers and magazines that come to their apartment. I asked her what she meant by deletrear and she said that it meant figuring out letter by letter what a word says rather than being able to join words together to read rapidly. She said that her children have more patience reading to her than her husband does and then asked me,

> Why do you think my children have more patience reading the newspaper to me? It's because they see toys they want, and they see the prices of the toys, and so they like to read them to let me know how much they are . . . . It's very little that my children or my husband have learned in English here. In Spanish, of course, they read to me a bit more. My children sometimes read to me the newspaper that comes in Spanish . . . . My husband reads it. He enjoys reading it because it's in Spanish. But when he arrives to read it, the children have already read it. The children--with them, I read it together with them slowly.

María remarked that her husband reads the English newspaper regularly, but only because the English teacher "requires" it for English reading practice.

Rebeca reported very little about the use of newspapers in her house. She told me that her husband would read the paper in El Salvador, but because she couldn't read, she did not buy a paper entre semana (during the week) because he was usually home only on weekends. Rebeca made no mention of Spanish language newspapers in Toronto. She told me that her daughter often reads to her from the advertising sections in English newspapers. Juan and Pedro also indicated that they rarely use newspapers in either Spanish or English. Carlos told me that he sometimes likes to have his mother read sports news to him from the Spanish newspapers.

Angela told me that she regularly reads Spanish newspapers and magazines here in Toronto for the news and the classified sections, and that she occasionally tries to read English papers only out of curiosity. She described this to me as follows:

> I like to read the [English] newspaper. I can't read it but I understand some things in the letters, and I become more aware of English. I try to understand some of it. And the Spanish

> newspaper--I like it for the news, and sometimes it carries items I like to know about such as celebrations, rentals, furniture sales, and then I can just go and buy. I like to be aware of things like that, such as job openings . . . I buy the Sun two times a week, and El Popular is three times a week. I read the Sun to try to read, or sometimes the pictures catch my attention, pictures of accidents. So then I like to read news about the wars, what happens in other countries, and in our own.

She summarized the way she uses the two papers by saying, "Everything in the Spanish one interests me. The English one, only out of curiosity--some interest. I read it, and understand some of it."

The people in my sample, then, apparently read Spanish newspapers particularly for the news. The English newspapers are used more for learning English or for finding out about advertised specials. Once again, other family members do much of the reading for those who cannot read.

School Work

School work is another home-based form of reading and writing identified by the people I interviewed. The kind of school work and school books that are found in people's homes vary, depending largely on the age of the children or the kinds of ESL programs the parents may be attending. There is, for example, a noticeable absence of written material in Juan's and Pedro's apartment with the exception only of the school books and exercises they bring home from ESL classes. Doña Ana's apartment provides a sharp contrast. She is surrounded by written material in her son's apartment. Her son stores academic journals and textbooks on shelves that line the walls of the rooms. She says, "Well, there are many [written materials] to read but I can't read any of it." When she has some time, however, she occasionally sits down to do some writing or reading practice assigned to her from the Spanish literacy class she attends.

Angela and María live in yet a different environment because young children live in their homes. They sometimes use English children's books to divert the pre-school children. Angela told me that her daughter sometimes checks books out from libraries for the children. María described how she sometimes reads pre-school books:

> . . . I look at the little animals [in an English ABC book] and at the letters, and I spend a few moments there, because it's only a few moments I can take to look at books with the little girl. How do you think I learned to say "potato" in English? By seeing the picture there because she brings her school books and goes over it and over it--potato, potato, potato--that's how it stayed with me.

> And the "A" for "apple". She repeats it and repeats it for me. Then it stays with me. But if you ask me for the letters, I don't remember the letters. The [English] word, though, stays.

Because Rebeca's children are all in upper grades at school, her apartment does not contain young children's books. But she bought a set of English encyclopedias and various sets of dictionaries to help her children in their education. They sometimes translate some passages for her, for example, passages from the encyclopedia entry on El Salvador. Otherwise, she gets little use from these books herself. However, like Doña Ana, she occasionally takes time to practice some of the reading and writing she brings home with her from the Spanish literacy class.

Overseeing the schooling of school aged children involves reading and writing practices as well. Before Rebeca fled El Salvador, her husband would help the children with their school work when he was home because she could not help them. All she could do, she told me, was to sit with them and tell them to work. Rebeca, however, must now oversee the education of her children on her own. Announcements of parents' association meetings, for example, or notes from the teachers and from school offices, and report cards come to the house. Rebeca described how she deals with this paper:

> They send home these papers from the school. I've asked them to send them in my language, typewritten, and then I can read them even if it takes a lot of effort to finish one page . . . . At first, when I got [these papers], even if they had been in Spanish, if [the children] didn't read them for me, I wouldn't know what they said.

The one facet of household business for which María's husband is responsible is the children's schooling. She told me, "They know that, for anything to do with the schools, they go to him." But María ties to ensure that homework gets done. One literacy practice which both Rebeca and María have developed to help them check that school work gets done involves marking the homework in their own ways. María described how she marks homework as follows:

> I don't know what they write because I don't know how to read . . . . And that problem I've always had with them. They would come with their assignment and I would ask, "Did you do your assignment?" "Yes. Here it is." But after a while I started to realize that they were showing me last week's assignments. They lied to me like that because they knew I couldn't tell the difference . . . . What I do now is mark an X where they can't erase it. That's how I keep track of daily assignments, and if they've been completed or not. That's when I started using the strategy of marking that way. Now they don't get away with it and it works.

Rebeca follows a more elaborate system of checking homework. The

teachers date the assignments for her because she says she can read the numbers. Then she signs her name after the work is completed to let the teacher's know she saw it.

To summarize, then, much of the school related reading and writing that my informants encounter at home is incomprehensible to them. Juan and Pedro are the main exceptions. Even Angela, who can read and write in Spanish, said that the main reading and writing activity that takes places regularly in her living room is the English homework that her daughter does, but because she knows little English, these books are of little use to her. It is her lack of English language skills rather than a lack of literacy skills which place her in a situation similar to some of the others who have few literacy skills. María, Rebeca, and Doña Ana have little access to their children's school books because of a combination of literacy and language obstacles. But this does not stop Rebeca and María from ensuring that school work gets done and it does not stop Rebeca from interacting with her children's teachers and dealing with the school related paperwork.

Bible Reading

Bible reading is another home-based literacy practice that the majority of my informants mentioned. Manuel told me that he learned to read and write in Spanish largely because of the home-based Bible reading and Bible study which was a regular part of his family's tradition in Central America. María had a good friend--a neighbor in Guatemala--who would read passages of the Bible to her when they had some spare time to visit. And Rebeca mentioned to me several times that, unlike herself, her husband was an evangelical, and consequently, when they lived in El Salvador, he would

> . . . read the Bible in the living room. Saturdays and Sundays, when he would come home, he would read a passage when we ate, and after coming home from the evangelical church. He read out loud for the children. I would be cooking, but sometimes I heard some. But I would also sit down to listen because it was important because it was for that reason that he was so responsible because he saw that the things of God are good. So, I also paid attention. He read out loud because he knew that I didn't know how to read and write].

Now that Rebeca can read printed Spanish slowly, she sometimes sits and tries to read the Bible. She told me that she finds it difficult both because she constantly encounters certain words she does not know how to read, and because she cannot find her way around the Bible to the different passages.

The Bible reading that people described occurs exclusively in Spanish. Even Lucía, the Italian woman I talked to, told me that she would prefer to be able to read the Bible in Italian, but, because she goes to a Spanish language pentecostal church, she has decided to learn to read the Bible in Spanish. She brought me a Spanish bookmarker with Bible references for special occasions written in fine print and asked me to rewrite them for her in large print because she wanted to learn how to find the passages in a Spanish Bible at home.

There are specific literacy skills, then, required for Bible reading. These include the ability to read reference abbreviations plus the ability to find one's way around in the Bible to find those passages. Rebeca also identified a writing practice she would like to learn which is an extension of this ability to use Bible references. It is the ability to jot down important points and references during sermons and Bible studies in order to be able to study them again at home.

Calendars

Written language appears in a number of other places in the home. Angela, for example, likes to hang plaques in her home which have Spanish sayings and prayers on them. Rebeca decorated her children's rooms in El Salvador with posters that had sayings on them. Most of the people in my sample also identified calendars as a place where written language appears in their homes, in English here in Canada, and in Spanish in their home countries.

María regularly depends on calendars. Although she recognizes only a small number of the letters of the alphabet, she has devised her own limited way of marking appointments on her calendar, a practice which she described to me in the following way:

> For example, I have an appointment with some doctor or with Manpower. I see the date there [on the card] and I mark it down, and then I know what date it is . . . . I don't miss it. For example, I put an X, and then I know which day. Where I mark the X, I look for the letter I copied beside it in order not to forget what the X is about, and then I know which day it is on . . . . I look for some letter on the appointment card they give me, or the paper from Manpower. I look for the date, and I go to [my husband], "What day would this be? When will it fall?" "Such and such a day," he says. Then at that place I add another letter from what I have on the card, and that way I don't forget. But what happens is that I hardly ever look for things on the calendar because I don't need it, except to remember appointments . . . . But . . . sometimes I lose the card. That's why I mark it down on the calendar to know the day because if I lose the card, then I don't have that problem. My husband helps me know which day an

> appointment is, and I mark it on the calendar . . . and then I don't have to ask again.

Doña Ana and Rebeca both told me that only their children use the calendars and that they themselves depend on memory plus the help of family members to keep them aware of appointments and other specific occasions. Rebeca told me that, in her house in El Salvador,

> I kept a calendar in every bedroom, and another in the living room, and in the kitchen. But for me, of course, they were hardly of any use. They had calendars because then you know every month as it passes. Only my husband used them, or my friends arrived and used them to say that such and such a date falls on such and such a day. But I didn't know how to use them. My husband would tell me, "It will be on such and such a date," and I would tell him, "But don't go telling me the month. No. Just tell me the day, if it's on the 22nd, and on what day it falls as well so I don't forget." It was better to tell me the day . . . . I asked my husband, or occasionally I asked my friends when he wasn't there. When he arrived, I asked him the date on which it fell, and then I went. But I had to memorize it in order to keep from forgetting it.

These descriptions suggest that, like Bible reading, calendar reading involves specific kinds of literacy skills. It includes the ability to read numbers, but requires more than numeracy skills, because Rebeca, for example, could read numbers, yet could not use the calendars independently. Yet calendars get used even by those who cannot use them without help. María, for instance, finds them indispensable. When I asked questions about the language on the calendars, my informants did not seem to think it mattered whether the words were in Spanish or English because those who helped them use the calendars had no problem using English or Spanish calendars.

The Television and the Telephone

My informants said very little about reading and writing in relation to the use of the television. Most, however, spoke of watching television. Doña Ana said that, at first, she watched what her son watched because she did not know how to turn the television on and switch channels. But now she watches programs on her own. María identified the notices that sometimes flash across the television screen as one kind of writing she saw in her house which she wished she could read.

The people in my sample all talked about using telephones. None of them have trouble with dialing. Only Juan, however, mentioned being able to use a telephone directory himself. Doña Ana told me that she asks friends to use the directories for her to help her locate the new addresses of friends who have moved. Doña Ana, Rebeca, and María each

regularly carry a booklet with them in which they have recorded the telephone numbers which they use regularly. Their addresses are also recorded in these notebooks for those occasions when they need to show or copy this information about where they live.

María told me she often needs to ask family members to help her write down and then later locate telephone numbers in her notebook when she forgets which number belongs to whom because she cannot read the names beside the numbers. To help her remember the most frequently used numbers, she places dots beside them. Doña Ana described similar practices when she told me how she uses the telephone:

> DA: I have no problem because I know how to use [the telephone]. I have my agenda where I keep people's telephone numbers, and I look for a number, and then . . .
>
> C: But how do you know which number belongs to which person?
>
> DA: Because I ask my son. I ask, "Look, I can't find the number of so and so. Find it for me and put a mark by it." Then he looks for it [in the booklet] and he marks a little dot by it.
>
> C: Do you write the numbers in the book?
>
> DA: No. He writes them in for me.

The numeracy skills necessary for operating a telephone do not require English numeracy or Spanish literacy. The way María and Doña Ana have others both write and later locate the names on their phone lists, and the way they resort to marking dots next to names in order to use the list for phoning, however, suggests that using phones requires more than numeracy skills. But those with few literacy skills simply depend on others to help them with these reading tasks.

THE CITY

Getting Around

To get from their homes to other parts of the city, the people I interviewed all, without exception, get around on the public transportation system and by foot. They have all learned to use public transportation well enough to get around, regardless of their level of literacy. María, for example, the informant with the least facility with written language and numbers, manages to navigate around the city by herself. She described how she gets around the city in the following way:

> Recognizing [individual] letters is how I manage to do things. That's how I managed to get around by myself. If not, I wouldn't get around by myself. I'd have to always go around accompanied.

> But recognizing the letters a bit, I come to understand things, and in the end I find out how and what I can do. I can recognize letters on the buses, for example for Keele . . . But that one doesn't take me all the way to where I go. I have to get off, walk a few blocks, and catch another. What I do is mark down the bus numbers, the numbers on the sign. So then I know which bus will take me. It's purely by memory that I can get around that way. If not, I couldn't go out. I'd get lost. [I do it] by just seeing what letter it is that comes at the beginning . . . . With one letter that I recognize, I manage to remember . . . . Half of the time I remember the [bus] sign when I see it. That's how I get around, and what I've done is get around by marking the number of the bus on my hand . . . . [When I get to the station], I compare the numbers [on my hand with the bus stop numbers] and that's where I go . . . . Now I carry a notebook with me where I keep everything recorded.

María avoids the subway, however. The practices she uses to get around above ground do not operate as well underground. She says, "It's difficult for me to use the subway because you have to go reading what the stations are as they go by." Consequently, when she is on her own, she does not use the subway unless she is very familiar with the stations where she gets on and off and how far apart they are. Dona Lucía also prefers not to use the subway to go to an unfamiliar station unless someone accompanies her.

Rebeca, Doña Ana, and Carlos, however, use the subways regularly. Doña Ana learned to use the subway systems in Montreal with a minimum of Spanish reading ability, she told me, "by remembering and counting the stops. Now, at least in Montreal, I go where I please and I know I won't get lost. I lived there eleven months." Of Toronto she says,

> Now I don't have any problems [getting around]. It was only in the first month, between August and September, those were the only times I got lost . . . . The problem was with the letters, but now I can follow them. Now I know I get on at that letter, and I watch, and I go to the College station. I leave the station and catch a bus that takes me to the Portuguese [Market].

Rebeca learned how to use the subways after her initial fear of them, because friends would give her very specific instructions over the phone. She described it to me in the following way:

> Before, it was hard to go on the subway because I always went on the surface. It's because of the stations--there were times that I passed by . . . . When I first arrived, I knew only two stations, Sherbourne and Dundas West. I wouldn't go anywhere else . . . . A friend had a good laugh at me when I told her, "Look, I won't take the subway. I'll get to Sherbourne on the surface." She laughed and told me, "When you arrive, phone me.". . . When I came out of the stations, I would say, "No, this is not the right place." I got lost. I got lost a lot then. But that's how I learned . . . .

> Another friend also helped me a lot. She would call me and say, "I'll wait for you in such and such a station," and I would say, "From where I am, just tell me which line to catch, the green or the yellow." She would also tell me, "Just count the number of stops, and get off there."

María, Carlos, Rebeca, and Doña Ana all told me that they use landmarks as reference points. Rebeca told me, "Another thing which has helped me a lot are the streets I pass on the way, even though I don't know their names. When I pass by them again, I remember that I've seen them before. That helps me a lot." Carlos told me that he always guides himself "by seeing what is around me whether it's a station, a bank, or a building."

Doña Ana and Rebeca both mentioned using the TTC maps to help them get around. I already quoted Rebeca as saying she uses the way the different subway lines are represented on the map in different colours (green, yellow and blue) to help her know which train to be on. Doña Ana has learned to locate her home station on the subway map, and can identify other stations in the downtown core. The spoken French she learned in Montreal helped her get around the city. Although she has learned almost no English in Toronto, however, she will stop people who pass by to have them indicate which train she should take to arrive at the stop she points to on the map.

Carlos uses much the same practices. He counts stations, he told me, as well as bus stops, traffic lights, and city blocks. He also recognizes individual letters and numbers. He described the way he gets around the city in the following way:

> If I don't know the house [I need to find], I ask my family, and I ask which bus goes to that place. I don't know how to use the TTC [public transportation] map, but it's easy, right? because I read the [first letter of the] station names . . . . I have the custom, probably like all Uruguayans and Argentineans--I count the stops.

An additional practice he uses is to have bus numbers, station names, and addresses written down so that he can compare the letters on the paper with the signs. He told me, "I know the letters but I don't know how to join them." He also uses the paper to show to someone if he gets lost. In a similar way, Doña Ana's son writes English names of products, addresses (for doctors offices, for example), and places onto a piece of paper. She compares the words on it with the signs or labels, or to show to people if she does not know by memory something she needs to get or a place she needs to find. Angela told me that, when she first arrived in Toronto, she needed to mark down bus numbers to find her way around,

but that now she knows her way around well enough and no longer needs to write anything.

The people I interviewed learn to get around, then, effectively. But it takes learning--becoming familiar with landmarks, learning to recognize sights, and, once again, using primarily numeracy skills such as marking down bus numbers and counting bus stops. They also learn to match letters written on a piece of paper with a station or bus sign. The subways are more difficult to use because of fewer surrounding details to help one differentiate between stations, and the need to follow written signs and instructions to know which train to take and to find their way around and out of the stations. But being able to recognize the first or last letters in station names helps some of them even with the subways. None of these practices, however, require English literacy skills.

The way in which literacy and languages mix in this domain (the streets) is important to point out. Most of those I talked to commented that it was easier for an illiterate to get around in their home countries because in their home countries they could just ask anyone they encountered on the street. In Canada they cannot so easily resort to this strategy for two reasons. The obvious reason, as both María and Rebeca pointed out, is that everyone in their home country speaks the same language they do. Consequently, there was not the same need to read signs in order to get around in Central American cities. But Juan and Pedro pointed out an additional reason. One cannot talk to strangers in Toronto the way one can in Latin America. Juan said, "You have to pay people here to talk to you." Doña Ana said, "People here go around sulking <u>andan amargadas</u>, especially the older people, and they're just as bad in Montreal." It seems that asking just anyone for directions is not as common in Toronto as it is in their home countries. Consequently, spoken English is not easy to practice or acquire in this "street" domain. They must resort more to forms of literacy and numeracy to get around, even if it simply involves marking down numbers and relying more on counting stops than on asking a fellow countryman to let you know at which stop to get off. But it is also important to notice that these literacy skills--using numbers and matching letters--do not require a knowledge of English.

Signs and Billboards

During the interviews, I asked questions to elicit information about

signs on stores and the advertising on billboards, buses, subways, and shop windows. María said that Guatemala is different from Canada because one does not have to read to operate there. Here, she said, "everything has to do with writing." But the only advertising that Rebeca and María talked about at some length was in reference to what arrives in the mail or in the newspapers. Carlos told me he was often curious to know what the writing on posters he often sees in elevators have to say. Doña Ana mentioned signs she had encountered in Caracas which warned people not to enter restricted areas. She said:

> If I was with my daughter or with my son, then they would tell me, "Here it says 'Prohibited. Do Not Enter,' and I would pay attention to it. But if I walked in without knowing, the watchman would say, "Look, can't you see that it says 'Do Not Enter'?" Then I would go back, and there was no more problem.

But the people I talked to had little else to say about signs in the city except to agree that they existed. English is the language of most advertising copy and of many signs found around the city and therefore is not very accessible to most of those I interviewed. Although it is possible that my questions failed to elicit the proper information, it is also likely that the people in my sample take little notice of this kind of writing when they see it while they move about the city.

Shopping

I have already briefly discussed shopping practices in the domain of food preparation at home, but the way literacy functions for shopping bears more attention. None of those with whom I talked reported having substantial difficulty with shopping. One of the reasons for this appears to be that most of the people I interviewed shop at Kensington Market. Rebeca, for example, prefers to buy fresh meat and produce. For these perishables, she shops every day at Kensington Market. She told me, "At the Portuguese [Market] there is no need to read . . . and the vendors know Spanish. All that's needed is talking." Rebeca and María told me that they identify what they need by sight and smell at the market, or by asking the vendor. When they shop at supermarkets, they also use sight and smell when possible, but they also depend on friends, spouses, or school-age children to read for them.

Rebeca prides herself on being an efficient and price conscious shopper. She says that her friends arrive at her house and marvel at what she has stored in the closets around the house. Because she cannot read the English newspapers, however, she becomes aware (<u>me doy cuenta</u>)

of specials because "a friend tells me, and sometimes my daughter says, 'Mother, on television they are announcing that such and such a product is on special.'" She said that her friend, who has been here for thirteen years, knows how to make one's money go as far as possible (para que su plata le rinde).

Rebeca learned to shop in bulk before she came to Canada. She described how she watched for specials even in El Salvador. In the larger stores here in Canada, she has learned which floors have the bargains and to recognize sales by the trappings. She told me, for example, that on the seventh floor of Eatons, "when products are cheaper, they have a sign in a different colour-- bright orange. I know its not a special if it doesn't have that sign." In supermarkets, which she uses mainly for nonperishables, she recognizes the pictures and logos on the packages of the products she buys. She keeps accounts and lists in her head. One kind of reading she told me she has learned because of bad experiences with spoiled milk is how to read expiry dates on dairy products.

María shops much the same way as Rebeca does except that María often forgets items and therefore sometimes tries to make a list. She described this practice in the following way:

> I mark down the things I need to buy. But I don't mark them down exactly. I only put down 1, 2, 3, 4, and like that. And then I say, "There are four things I needed to buy. What was it that I was going to buy?" In the end I remember, and then I buy it. And like that until I finish getting those things, and that's what I do in the kitchen. It's difficult for me. But that way I don't have problems.

Although María takes her children to help carry the food as well as to help her navigate around large supermarkets (she told me that she cannot read labels or signs announcing specials in the supermarkets), she said she prefers to do her food shopping at Kensington Market.

Doña Ana shops in small supermarkets close to her apartment. Like Rebeca, she prefers to buy fruit, mostly, and fresh produce. Because she cooks with simple ingredients, she needs to do very little discovering of new products or reading packages or tins. The kind of shopping she normally does requires only the ability to read numbers. She told me,

> I don't run into any problems because I can now read the numbers. I see a bag of apples--it's so much. A bag of something else--so much. I now know what it is . . . . I don't have any problem because I buy it the way it is, as I see it, and as I need it.

She told me in an earlier conversation that because she could not read

the special offers that were announced in writing in the stores, she could only take advantage of signs which had numbers. As a result, she did not closely follow the specials. She told me as well that when she cannot find something because she cannot remember the name of the product in English, "then I take it written down. My son writes it down in English."

The men I interviewed did not give many details about shopping. Carlos said that his mother does all of the shopping. Manuel told me that he does almost no shopping because he eats the food at the restaurant where he works. Juan and Pedro, unlike most of the women, said that they rarely use Kensington market because supermarkets are closer to where they live. But they can also read at a basic level in English, which helps them some in the supermarkets. Although they can read the English on the labels reasonably well, however, Pedro told me, "Many times we do not know what kind of food that is."

The kind of shopping the people in my sample tend to engage in, then, primarily requires the ability to read numbers. As María told me, "You will have noticed that everything here has its price marked." Juan said, "Everything has its little sign attached, with the price." Numbers effectively cross over language barriers and therefore allow an Hispano to manage without English. This is demonstrated by the way Angela writes down on a slip of paper how much she is willing to pay for something if the vendor does not understand her offer. The fact that she can bargain in spite of a language barrier while at the same time using a somewhat uncommon purchasing practice for Toronto (bargaining) demonstrates that shopping does not create insurmountable obstacles for her. The ability to read English signs is useful for shopping in supermarkets, in particular, and for taking advantage of specials (as advertised in flyers received at home as well as on signs on the displays in stores), but English reading is not necessarily essential because there are often other ways of recognizing what to buy, such as colour, pictures, logos, and smells. When reading is needed in the larger stores, children or spouses sometimes come to do the reading.

OFFICES

Government Offices

My informants reported visiting a variety of offices, from government, community services, and lawyers' offices, to doctors' offices and school principals' offices. In this section I deal primarily with government

offices because I deal with banking, the health care system, and schooling in later sections.

Much of the reading and writing required by Canadian bureaucracies is in English (and French, of course), but many of the books, pamphlets, and signs in government offices are in Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese, all of which Spanish literates can often read with basic comprehension. Thus, non-English-speaking Hispano literates do not necessarily need English to deal with many of the literacy demands in the government bureaucracies. Even non-literate Hispanos find they can manage because there are often Spanish-speaking counselors and officers to help them in many offices.

There are two sides to the literacy related practices in these offices. On the one hand, written language is an unavoidable fact in the operation of bureaucracies. But on the other hand, friends, family members, and social services professionals are usually available to provide instructions and information to, and fill out the paperwork for, non-literates and non-English speakers. The availability of others to do the reading and writing required by bureaucracies in Canada roughly parallels what several of my informants told me about the way in which public servants in their home countries routinely fill out forms and applications for clients as a normal part of their occupations. Angela, for example, described how, as secretary of a city market vendors' association in Ecuador, she used her reading and writing skills to prepare, read, and maintain the minutes from association meetings, to help prepare the <u>solicitudes</u> (official petitions) to push through the opening of a new market, and to keep the association records, but when any arrangements, permissions, or registration of vehicles took her to government offices, she never did any writing because secretaries filled out the necessary paperwork. She said,

> In government offices, all you do is sign, nothing more. There are people there who have to fill them out for you. You just had to sign the corresponding documents, no? The <u>solicitudes</u> they do in the same offices--but one doesn't have to write; the secretaries there do it.

Doña Ana told me that, in all of the places she had lived, she seldom had had the need to go to offices. Her husband had been responsible for getting their children's birth certificates. Only once did she have to go to an office before she moved to the city, and that, she said, was to purchase <u>un terrenito</u> (a plot of land). To do that she had been required

to poner las huellas (get fingerprinted) in place of signing her name. It was not until she moved to Caracas later in life that she was required to apply for a cèdula (identification card), and later for her passport and visa. Again, family members helped her get the paperwork arranged, and all she was obligated to do herself was to struggle through the ordeal of signing her name on the forms. She said that she seldom needed anyone to accompany her to other offices (for example, to register her children in schools), however, because she would tell the secretary that she did not know how to write and "the secretary would tell who ever was there applying for papers, 'Sign for this señora.'"

Although office personnel in Canada do not formally fill the role of scribe to nearly the same extent as their counterparts in many Latin American countries, I discovered in the course of the interviews that my informants find people to fill that role for them here in Canada. Juan, for example, who has basic literacy skills in both Spanish and English, depends on lawyers and church connections to help him and his brother do the paperwork to get landed immigrant status. Similarly, Manuel is waiting while his brother-in-law and a lawyer do the paperwork for him. Carlos told me that he was required to get a letter from his employer saying that there was a job available for him so that his lawyer could do the paperwork to arrange for his work permission. To get his Social Insurance Number, he told me, he went to a Manpower office where a counselor filled out the forms for him, and all he needed to do was sign.

My informants manage with reasonable effectiveness to take care of bureaucratic paperwork by learning which offices to go to for which piece of paper, getting other people to tell them about the papers and to fill in the forms for them, and then simply signing in the end. This ability to manage paperwork is perhaps the essential skill required in this bureaucratic domain. Although this ability to manage paperwork is perhaps not recognized as a literacy skill, it involves the use of written language. This skill includes knowing which offices require which pieces of paper, organizing pieces of paper to be able to find them and present the proper information and identification, in a bank, for example, or at an immigration office. The skill also includes safekeeping documents in order to have them available when needed. Doña Ana, for example, has carefully stored her children's birth certificate, because she said she has "had to do many things with them."

María's account of dealing with government offices provides a useful

case study of how, even with a minimum facility with written language, a non-English speaking person can manage with many of the reading and writing practices associated with Canadian bureaucracies. One of the first times I met María was at the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture's Welcome House. I met her when she came out of an English class on the third floor and followed her to the fifth floor to the office of the counselor she customarily dealt with. She needed help with what to her was an unusual OHIP bill which her husband had not been successful in deciphering for her at home. The fact that she could not read or write even in Spanish became clear to me when she walked with out a pause past a sign which announced in four or five languages including Spanish that there was no admittance without an appointment. When she failed to find the counselor, we returned to a reception area where I explained the problem in English to a receptionist who gave the bill to a Spanish-speaking secretary who then filled out the paperwork and arranged for the bill to be payed. It is in this way that María takes care of the household business.

To summarize, then, I found that depending on scribes to do one's bureaucratic paperwork is the normal way of functioning for the Hispanos I interviewed. It is the way they were accustomed to going about official business in their own countries. Contrary to what I had expected, lack of English language skills is not an insurmountable obstacle in the bureaucratic domain because Spanish-speaking scribes can often be found. Also, forms and signs often appear in Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian. The two essential skills proved to be the ability to manage the paperwork (store it, find it, etc.), to find appropriate offices and scribes, and to sign one's name. Name signing is another use of written language which is important in this domain. It will come up again in later sections.

Banking

The banking that my informants described doing, as I expected, requires certain reading and writing practices that are somewhat specific to banks. Rebeca, until recently, had no bank account largely because the entire government cheque she gets was used on food, clothing, accommodation, school books, and paying back the airfare for her family's trip to Canada. Nothing is left to save. But to pay her bills, she has the habit of going to a bank to cash the cheque and to buy money orders which the tellers prepare for her and which her daughter fills out for

her. María also has no bank account, but she painstakingly and not entirely legibly copies identification onto the back of government cheques to endorse them at a bank designated by Manpower. She of course cannot read what she copies. She knows what it says only because her husband told her. She described her banking as follows:

> . . . the social insurance number, it's necessary to put it on the cheque--but that's just to copy it. I carry my address with me; I copy it onto the cheque. You only have to give them the cheque and you sign there in front of them. If something else must be filled out, then they fill it out.

Comparing her experience here in Canada to her experience in Guatemala, however, she indicated that she feels more constrained here, not by an inability to write or use numbers on paper, but by English. She told me,

> I had an account in Guatemala, and more or less, it works the same way here. In Guatemala, when I would get to the bank, I would ask someone to do me the favour of filling out the slip that has those little boxes that need to be filled. You can ask anyone in your own country because there are many people who will do you the favour. Here, no, because of the fact that I don't know the language. I know if I did, they would do it for me. But because of the language, I can't do the same here as I did there.

Juan told me that he and Pedro both have bank accounts and that he needs no assistance. Pedro, however, explained his problems with banking in the following way:

> [I can fill out cheques]. What I can't do is fill out the forms one gets when one goes to the bank. They give you two small pieces of paper which say how much you will put in and how much you will take out. I studied thAt at school, but it's very complicated. I don't know how to add--you have to add--how much I put in and how much I keep, and the total below. They tell me, "Fill this out." I can't. . . . The tellers have to do it because it's their work. . . . I read some and write some, but I can't do mathematics. . . . Yes, names and addresses, and other things, where I'm from, and a host of other things--I can fill out applications. But numbers, no, because you have to add.

Carlos also has a bank account in which he deposits his earnings. But his situation is almost the opposite to Pedro's. He can do the mathematics which Pedro cannot. He says, "I know numbers. In that, I've never been lost [when it comes to numbers], thank God." But Carlos cannot read or write well enough in Spanish or English to fill out the written sections on cheques and bank slips. What he does have the ability to do is copy, very legibly in cursive script, any English or Spanish writing he has in front of him. The end result, however, is that he does his banking much like Pedro--by having the teller fill in the

bank slips for him. He presents the bank booklet, endorses his cheque with identification that he copies, and then signs the cheque and the bank slips.

It is clear from these examples that banking involves a configuration of specific skills that includes specific reading and writing practices as well as numeracy practices. English also enters in. The primary English skill required is filling in the written English equivalent to the numerical digits on cheques and withdrawal slips. The non-English specific skills include the abilities to recognize, record, and calculate with numbers on bills and cheques as well as the ability to copy letters and numbers (one's address, for example) and to sign one's name. Banking also involves the ability to manage papers--knowing what identification is needed, what kind of paper transaction to ask for, which slips of paper to use, and what information goes where on those slips. María, for example, although she cannot read any of the writing on the telephone bill, nevertheless goes to the bank and knows how much to pay because she learned the format of the telephone bill and knows where to find the amount owed.

The Health Care System

Use of the health care system in Toronto includes another office domain with specific reading and writing demands. Bill paying and OHIP coverage have already been mentioned above as part of the English written material that either arrives in the home through the mail or is encountered in government offices. As they do with other kinds of literacy, most of those I interviewed depend on others to do this reading and writing for them. I have already described how María takes her questions about OHIP bills and forms to government counselors. Angela, however, rarely deals with government counselors. She told me that there was one time when she was not getting paid and needed to apply for OHIP premium assistance. Instead of going to government services people for help, she asked a fellow worker to accompany her. She told me,

> I went [to the OHIP office] then, but they didn't understand what I was trying to say. I asked a Canadian friend from work to do me the favour [of helping me]. So he went with me and told them that I was in a difficult situation--that they weren't paying me, and that I needed to see a doctor. They gave me a form to fill out, but I couldn't do it. Another person filled it out for me, the man who helped me did it for me.

Non-English speaking Hispanos who live in Toronto have available to them many doctors' offices where Spanish is spoken and where the

paperwork can often be done in a variety of languages. Carlos, for example, showed me an appointment reminder from a doctor's office which included directions and explanations in several languages, including Spanish. Rebeca told me that the doctor she goes to, although an Asian, speaks Spanish. María told me she has been taking her children to doctors regularly, at least once a month for vaccinations, and occasionally to get medications for colds, and she had no language problems. Thus, it is clear that language does not necessarily create an obstacle when it comes to actually going to see a doctor. And as with other offices, secretaries are available to fill in the paperwork. María told me that, in the doctor's office, "the secretary fills the papers out for me. I just take the papers and she fills them out." Doña Ana told me that in Montreal, when she went to doctors' offices, "I didn't have to read because my son would take me, and my daughter-in-law as well. The papers the doctors would give me, they would fill out for me."

It is after the visit to the doctor that many of my informants identified a need to themselves deal with written language--reading the instructions on medications to know how and when to use the drugs. María and Rebeca described in detail how they take care to ask for instructions and then pay close attention to explanations on the proper use of the drugs. Rebeca explained the need she had in El Salvador when her children were too small to read for her,

> What would also have been good for me to know how to read were medicines. I had to pay close attention when they explained them to me in order to know how many spoons I should give everytime I gave it to the children. I listened closely to see if they told me before or after the meal. I had to make sure that it all stayed with me, otherwise I could harm my children. I would say to the nurse at the pharmacy, "Please, explain it to me slowly . . .] so I can remember it." "No," she would say, "It's there on the paper." So then I would tell her, "Yes, I can see it here, but I don't know how to read," because I've never denied it because that way I felt more secure that they could help me, because if I would tell them, "Oh, okay," I would be no better off, no? So they would tell me, "If you don't know, we'll tell you" and then they would tell me because they, more than others, are good people.

María goes one step further to remember the dosages and when to administer the medications:

> [With medicines], for example, I say to my husband, "Read this for me here." He reads it and says, "This is what it says." So then I do that. When I go to give them medicine, I remember. I mark several letters on the bottle itself which tell me at what times to give them the medicine. By writing that letter, I remember the time to give the medicine.

María also identified an additional step she must take to get medication. She is required to take the doctor's prescription to a Manpower counselor who fills out a payment voucher for her which she then delivers to the designated pharmacy in order to acquire the medication. This once again illustrates her ability to manage paperwork without being able to read and write even in Spanish.

Doña Ana told me that, by the time she lived in a city where drugstores even existed, her children were in school and could read the instructions for her. She said, "When they were older, they could then understand and they would read it. That's how I solved [the problem] all of my life, thank God."

In the course of the interviews, I asked my informants about the reading and writing they encountered in hospitals. No one described being an in-patient in Canada. Pedro and Juan said they never had the need to go to hospitals. As mentioned earlier, Doña Ana said someone, usually her son, accompanied her when she had to go to clinics for appointments. Only Rebeca and Angela identified the need to read signs to get around inside hospitals. Rebeca said she sometimes would go with friends from the church to visit patients. She gave the example of the elevators:

> In hospitals, there's no need to write. But it's important to read. The hospital I'm visiting this week, it has many elevators. I didn't know how to get around the hospital in them because, if the person is in intensive care, there's one elevator you have to take. And when you are outside of the area where they do the operations, it's on another floor and you have to use different elevators. So, one needs to know [how to read]. Or when a sign says "Intensive Care" or"Emergency" and like that.

In sum, then, the reading and writing which is involved in using the health care system in Toronto suggests that it is similar to other bureaucratic domains discussed earlier--it requires finding offices and managing paperwork. Spoken English is often not necessary because there are many doctors' offices where Spanish is spoken. The way María jots down her own code to help her remember dosages, and the way Rebeca goes out of her way to have nurses explain in detail how to use medicines, however, suggest that the ability to follow medication instructions is perceived as a particularly important use for English reading skills which is encountered specifically in this health care domain.

SCHOOLS AND THE CLASSROOM

The people I interviewed identified primarily two school related

situations they encounter in the city--contact with their children's schools and attending ESL classes. Job training is another classroom setting which was occasionally identified in the interviews, but none of my informants had actually taken such courses. What they said reflects aspirations they have rather than experience they can relate. I will discuss vocational training again in the next chapter. The second language classroom is the classroom domain described in most detail by the people I interviewed and consequently it will receive the most attention in this section. But first I will discuss the kinds of reading and writing encountered as a result of having children in the school system.

The Children's Schools

One school-related domain described by several of my informants has to do with the schooling of children. Rebeca, María, Angela, and Doña Ana all described their experiences of having school-aged children in their homes. Their descriptions suggest a wide variety of situations.

Rebeca has always visited her children's schools. She was in the habit of frequently visiting her children's teachers in El Salvador because she wanted to make sure her children received the kind of education she wished she had had. Here in Toronto she attends the parents' meetings even though she often cannot understand what is being said. She told me that, in order to register her children in the schools, "I only have to take the passport with the visa, and they see everything there. And they fill out everything for me." The only writing she reported having to do in this domain was to sign her name on registration forms as well as on membership lists at the parents' meetings.

There is, however, as mentioned earlier, the need to read the announcements about meetings, for example, or notes from the teachers and from school offices, and report cards that come to the house. Although Rebeca's older son and her daughter read and translate the report cards for her, she said, "I take [the cards] to the parents' meetings, because my son, who is learning the language, it's possible that he might make some mistakes in this, and so I take them to someone who knows the whole language. Then I feel much more secure."

Unlike Rebeca, María has almost nothing to do with the schools her children attend because, as described earlier, the one area of household business that her husband looks after is the schooling of the children.

Doña Ana also told me that she had had no need to be in contact with her children's teachers when her children were going to school because they had all been diligent students. The only contact she had with the schools was to register her children in schools. She said, "I didn't write anything because I told them right from the start that I didn't know how to write. Somebody else who was there would sign for me." María also described registering her children for school in Guatemala. People would start to line up early in the morning in order to register their children. Registration only involved paying matriculation fees, however, but did not require any writing.

Rebeca and María have both encountered school related problems with their children. I described in the earlier section on school work in the home that they had encountered problems trying to check that school work was completed. They also told me about other difficulties. María has had trouble getting her children to attend school regularly. A problem Rebeca had with the schools is that her children were being kept out of academic subjects and in English classes. With the help of school board community workers, she learned to go to the schools to talk to principals and teachers. She memorized a series of questions in Spanish to ask at the schools to ensure that her children were not streamed into nonacademic programs and that they were allowed into academic courses such as mathematics. With her own persistence and the help of the school board community workers and translators, she managed to transfer her children to different schools where she felt they would be happier.

Managing the reading and writing that comes with the schooling of children is much like other house-hold business. It involves finding offices and managing paperwork and it often requires the help of spouses and/or community workers. As with doctors' offices, the schools often provide Spanish-speaking liaison people to help facilitate communication between parents and the school system. The difficulty of accomplishing good communication in this way, however, is illustrated by the frustrations and amount of effort expended by Rebeca in attempting to stay in touch with her children's schooling.

The Second Language Classroom

All of the people in my sample, with the exception of Manuel, have attended second language classes. The amount of time spent in ESL (or French as a Second Language in Doña Ana's case) classrooms varies, from Angela, who attended an ESL class several times before getting too

humiliated to go back again, to Juan, Pedro, and Rebeca, who have experimented with many ESL programs in the city.

The second language class is a domain, however, which is different from the other domains discussed to this point in two respects. First, unlike the other domains discussed above, the language classroom is completely new to my informants. Some of them have had some primary schooling, and the importance of that classroom experience in both literacy and language learning is an important issue which I will address at more length in following chapters. Here I will point out that, perhaps with the exception of Juan who had four years of primary education in El Salvador, none of those I interviewed had much previous classroom experience, particularly language classroom experience. But they all have had a great deal of experience in their home countries, and to some extent in the United States, dealing with home, street, office, and shop domains. The language classroom is not merely a new manifestation of an already experienced domain; it is completely new.

The second way in which the second language classroom is different from the other domains discussed so far is that students cannot rely on strategies they use in other domains to deal with written language. They cannot rely on paper management skills, or on memorizing the format of forms, or on scribes (family, friends, or professionals) to do the reading and writing essential to that domain. Because the language learning process in many language classrooms depends largely on written language, the heuristic purposes that reading and writing serve cannot be accomplished through these other strategies. This suggests that purposes for written language in the classroom differ from the purposes for written language in other domains.

María's experience of ESL classes provides a good example of the problems a non-literate Hispano can have in a second language classroom. She stopped going to English classes, she said, because she has too many family matters to take care of as well as because, although she learned some vocabulary, going to ESL classes merely involved copying letters and words she couldn't understand while she either worried about family problems or struggled to stay awake. She told me,

> I wouldn't be able to describe what the teacher writes for the students to read--because I can't read and I don't understand what it is. For example, today I copied from the blackboard. I don't know what it says, though. I copied it for writing practice. That's all. But I don't know what . . . because I still can't tell what all of the letters are.

As a result, she says, me quedo igual (literally, "I remain the same," which means, "I do not benefit from being there.")

It is true, of course, that not all second language classrooms have the same characteristics when it comes to how reading and writing are used as part of the classroom activities. Contrasting and comparing the different classroom experiences of the people I spoke to suggests that ESL classes and teachers are not all alike. Three of my informants described classrooms in which spoken language is emphasized and where written language is not essential to the teaching and learning of the language. Doña Ana told me that, when she lived in Montreal, her daughter-in-law enrolled her in a French class where, in spite of her lack of literacy skills, she learned numbers, greetings, and days of the week, plus other vocabulary orally in French because the teacher "tested me orally with questions, and conversed with me. . . . She was a beautiful woman in the way she had such patience with me."

Juan told me that he and Pedro learned strictly conversational English before being given reading and writing instruction in the ESL program they attended in the United States. In response to a question I asked about what kind of writing they did in the English classes in the U.S., he said,

> No, not writing. We learned to understand better. We have problems with our writing. Don't think we have good writing. No. We still lack in that area. But mostly what we learned was to understand quickly, listening to rapid talk.

Pedro began learning English orally before knowing how to read and write well even in his own language. He learned to read and write English well enough in this ESL program he attended in the United States to manage intermediate level classes in Canada. When I asked Juan if he had used his Spanish writing abilities to help him learn English in those classes, he said that Spanish had not been permitted in the classroom, and that they had had no need to use Spanish writing in the classroom. And Juan now goes to advanced level classes. This suggests that ESL programs exist which effectively teach oral and written English without heavy dependence on mother-tongue literacy.

Other experiences that were reported to me, however, suggest that lack of mother-tongue literacy skills often leads to exclusion from the second language classroom. Dona Lucía, for example, described how one ESL teacher told her that, because of the other students in the class who could read and write in their own languages, there was not enough time

to give her the kind of attention she kept asking for. Doña Ana told me that she has not found an ESL teacher in Toronto who will give her the same kind of oral instruction she received in Montreal with French. She attended a basic level English class here in Toronto several times. But, she said, "Nothing stayed in my head." Then she told me,

> The teacher told me I couldn't attend. She said, 'You're going to have to learn Spanish first, because you can't be in this school.' So I said, 'Okay, teacher, but what should I do then?' She told me something about a Spanish school somewhere. I didn't go back.

In the course of my search for informants, several ESL teachers I contacted, as well as an immigrant services coordinator, also told me that non-literate students are often referred to other programs which, according to rumour, service non-literates. Most teachers, they told me, do not have the time to give the one-to-one assistance which non-literates are perceived to require. I visited one of the classes rumoured to help non-literates and found that the teacher there referred non-literate students that came to her class to yet another program.

Several of the people I interviewed also described how they were screened out of higher level ESL courses. Rebeca's ESL experience provides a good example:

> They had me in higher level courses--in the third level--but only because I understand [English]. But later they returned me to the same level, number one, because I can't write or read. I just understand. Along with another Italian woman who also studies there. She understands a lot, but because she doesn't know how to read, the same as what happens with me. . . . So they returned us both.

One of the ESL program directors I spoke with told me that non-literates are frequently placed into the basic level beginners classes until (and if) they learn to read and write English well enough to do the reading and writing that goes with language learning in higher levels. Otherwise, they remain in the basic beginners' level.

Rebeca told me that, as a result of remaining in the basic beginner level, she is now able to tutor recently arrived literate Spanish speaking students in the basic level English vocabulary. She described it in this way:

> [In the English classes] there are several Colombian and Ecuadorian women. They can read your language, but they don't know what it says. So they ask me, and because I know it by memory, I tell them, "This is what it means." . . . They don't know what they're reading. I'm in just the opposite situation . . . . They read, but I don't know how to.

In another interview, she described a specific example:

> [In my class], there is a Colombian girl who just recently arrived. She finished university already and she has studied a lot, but they have her in the first level course there because she doesn't know the language. But she works like a machine, copying everything. She tells me, "But I don't know what I'm writing down." She wants to know the words that they are teaching us each day, and because I already know them, I tell her, "Well, write it in Spanish underneath it because this is what it means." I haven't learned to write them, because I don't know how to write.

Most of the literacy skills Rebeca has acquired have not been from ESL classes. She has been learning to read and write in Spanish because friends and occasional tutors have worked with her. Doña Ana also learned to read some Spanish from a friend she met in her French class in Montreal who taught her Spanish reading at home. She is just now learning to write Spanish in a literacy class.

Some of the basic literacy skills necessary to function in many ESL classes, particularly in levels higher than basic beginners courses, become evident in the different repertoire of skills Rebeca, Juan, and Pedro indicated they have or do not have. I became aware of some of the skills Rebeca has and does not have both from comments she made in interviews and from the literacy tutoring I have done with her. She can only read and write print. She told me, "I can't read letters that come from my family because I haven't learned that kind of lettering yet--the run together lettering." As a result, all writing on black boards, handouts, and exercise sheets which is in cursive script is inaccessible to her.

Also, when she reads, she depends primarily on one word attack skill--decoding each word phonetically, syllable by syllable, in Spanish. She knows very few whole words by sight in Spanish or English. This phonetic decoding skill helps her to decipher words much more successfully in Spanish than in English, not only because Spanish writing follows a simpler phonetic system than English does, but also because her native knowledge of how Spanish is supposed to sound gives her more clues as to how successfully the sounds she is decoding join together into comprehensible Spanish. She knows what English should sound like only with the beginners' level vocabulary and phrases she has memorized. Consequently, her written work in the English classroom is often limited to copying bunches of letters which are meaningless to her when she reviews what she has done.

Compared to Rebeca, Pedro has a much larger repertoire of English words he recognizes by sight, but his repertoire of Spanish sight words

is limited. I became aware of this during one of my meetings with him which included a trip to a bookstore. He was looking for books that would improve his mathematics skills. He haltingly read several passages from an English book he picked off of a shelf and asked me for the meaning of several words, but otherwise read with some comprehension, rarely stopping to sound out unfamiliar words. However, when we looked at a Spanish dialogue in a Spanish as a Second Language textbook, he read by decoding common Spanish words phonetically syllable by syllable rather than recognizing them by sight as he had done for many of the more common English words in the English book. As with Rebeca, his knowledge of Spanish helped him piece together the sounds. But it resulted in a noticeably different style of reading from the English reading he had just performed. The two kinds of reading involved rather different reading strategies.

Another skill that Pedro, María, and Rebeca all claimed to lack is the ability to use dictionaries effectively. Pedro identified some of the skills he would like to learn in order to use the dictionary more effectively. He told me that, although he does not know the order of the alphabet, he can often find a word by skimming through the dictionary looking for the first letter, and then skimming once again for the second or third letters, which are more difficult to use, but then there are fewer words to skim through at that level. But what limits him more than not knowing the order of the alphabet, he told me, is that he does not know Spanish well. When I disagreed and said he knows Spanish much better than I do, he explained that the words he tries to look up in the dictionary are often rural El Salvadorean <u>modismos</u> (idiomatic words and phrases) and therefore do not appear in Spanish-English dictionaries. He also feels his knowledge of Spanish is poor because he does not know how to look for root words, or the forms in which a given word will appear in a dictionary. He described this problem in the following way:

> The problem is that in Spanish I can't find a word because I don't understand what is the root of the word--the head--of the verb. I don't know which is the verb. I make mistakes, no? I can't find them. I find something else that isn't the verb. And I often use idioms, and I go to find the word, and it's not there.

Rebeca identified similar problems. She does not know Spanish, she said, the way those who have gone to school know it. Three of the specific component skills of a schooled knowledge of Spanish which Rebeca claims she lacks are standard Spanish vocabulary, order of the alphabet,

and the transformations Spanish verbs go through in the various conjugations so that she can use a dictionary and know what the English teacher means when she/he talks about English verbs.

There is a sense, then, in which second language classrooms tend to require Spanish literacy skills other domains explored to this point do not. These include such abilities as writing Spanish translations next to unfamiliar English vocabulary, and knowledge of standard Spanish spelling, grammar, and vocabulary in order to be able to use such tools as dictionaries, or to understand grammar points which teachers explain orally or illustrate on exercise sheets or blackboards. It would perhaps be more precise to categorize many of these skills as "schooled" skills, or language analysis skills, rather than as "literacy" skills. I refer in more detail to this issue later in this thesis, but at this point I will point out that it is difficult to isolate literacy skills from schooled skills because schooling requires a set of literacy skills unique to classroom activities and intellectual pursuits.Another reason why it is difficult to separate schooled skills from literacy skills is that teachers and non-literate students alike tend to perceive the students' inability to function in language classrooms to be a direct result of their lack of mother-tongue reading and writing skills. And the fact that it is the lack of specific Spanish reading and writing skills that are blamed for the language learning difficulty suggests that what is at issue are very specific kinds of skills, yet nevertheless reading and writing skills.

THE WORKPLACE

Only about half of the people I interviewed were employed. With the exception of Carlos, those who are employed are the more literate individuals in the sample. Pedro, Juan, Angela, and Manuel all read and write reasonably well in Spanish.

Pedro works in a medical building. He described his work to me in terms of the English reading and writing he encountered on the job. He said,

> There are cardboard boxes which I fill with bottles I've washed. I write on them what's inside--big bottle, short cap, big cap, small cap. And I write on the boxes, no? And sometimes they come with labels that have been filled out and I have to read them. And the labels have the date, and I read it to see if the date is expired. If it's expired, I wash them, and if not, I take them to the mail room where they return them to be re-distributed.

He also talked about reading the names of diseases on labels as well as

names of injections on other bottles. When he encounters unfamiliar labels, he asks the people he works with what the unfamiliar words mean. He told me that there are also "many papers I have to understand . . . with work regulations, and sometimes the regulations change." These regulations are in English and have to do with laboratory equipment and procedures. He should give bottles which have "poison" labels on them, for example, to the supervisor rather than put them in the garbage.

Pedro told me that he is able to comprehend some of this English in the pamphlets and circulars that are distributed. But he also said that he works with other hispanic employees who know English well and who translate the words and phrases he has trouble understanding. He does not get much practice speaking English, he told me, because he speaks Spanish at work. He must speak English only occasionally when he talks to his supervisor, or sometimes asks one of the "gringos" at work to answer a question he may have. Pedro described other places where written English appears at work:

> At the entrance there's a bulletin board where they post job notices, and also every Friday they give us newspapers from work. It has everything--about apartments, and cars for sale, and work . . . . I read it and that's how I know where there are jobs.

Juan, the most literate and most fluent English-speaker of those in my sample, works in a factory. He does no writing, he said, because that takes place in the offices, but he described signs that appear in the factory:

> There are--what do you call them?--warnings, no? in all the different areas or places in the factory. I understand most of them . . . There are also calendars, all of the usual things . . . warnings on the machines, how to use them, and the signs [with the names of the manufacturers on them].

He gave some examples of what was written on some of the signs:

> No Smoking, Exit, Washroom, and there's a door which says "Please be Careful When . . ." I don't know. What does it say? It asks people that, when they open the door, not to let it slam. And on another it says to clean your boots when you enter the office.

Angela lost her first job in a cafeteria because she could not communicate in English with the kitchen staff or with the clientele. She has now learned sufficient English on the job, however, to communicate with the kitchen staff and clients. She depended at first on her daughter to translate over the phone for the supervisor. She once asked me to translate an English recipe into Spanish for the main meat course of a special banquet that was being prepared where she works. She says

she often uses English cook books:

> I have some cookbooks and sometimes when I'm not too busy, or I'm interested in something specific, I look. The books are in English, no? but I understand some of it.

In another conversation, she described more specifically what she understands in these books:

> I see the list of spices, and the preparation instructions, but here [in Canada] there are many things I don't know about, because in Ecuador, apart from garlic, cumin, oregano, parsley, and pepper--we don't use so many spices . . . . But here I see names of things I don't know what they're for, and I read them in the books and it bothers me that I don't know them in order to use them.

But what helps her, she says, is that the cookbooks and magazines are full of pictures which guide her--"I like to see how to make the salads, and how to improve the things at work." Two kinds of writing she reported doing at work are signing delivery slips and occasionally labelling the cans, bottles, and boxes of spices and ingredients with Spanish names so that she can identify them readily. She does not, however, depend exclusively on such labels because she often identifies ingredients by taste, sight, and smell, much as María and Rebeca told me they identified specific ingredients in stores and at home.

Carlos works as a janitor. I became aware of few practices which involve written language in his work. He told me he needs to do no reading or writing but that on occasion he shows his work permission papers (which he always carries with him) to policemen on late night security encounters in the buildings he cleans at night. He also has an almost weekly disagreement with his Portuguese employer because he sometimes finds discrepancies on his cheque. This demonstrates that, although his reading and writing abilities even in Spanish are minimal, his numeracy skills are adequate to understand most of the figures and calculations on his paycheques. He also works at his brother's pizza parlour part-time. In his description of this work, he claims that he needs to identify only one or two words:

> We have the practice of going to large buildings and putting flyers into the doors . . . . I have two buildings with twenty floors. I don't really have to read to do this work. The word I understand is the N with the O. But when they put an S, I'm not always sure if that word says "Super." It's that person whose door we don't put flyers into because he can phone and say he had trouble with me. So I always look for that word. I understand [spoken] English more or less, but they don't understand me [when I speak].

Doña Ana also once worked as a cleaner--cleaning bank offices in Venezuela. She identified three ways in which she encountered written

language on the job. The first one had to do with signing cheques:

> When they paid me for the first two weeks, they paid with a cheque. When I went to cash it, the cashier said, "There's a problem here because you don't know how to read." So I returned to the supervisor of personnel, and I went in and he signed it . . . . But the next week the [manager's] secretary tells me, "You have to learn to sign your name, because we can't keep doing it this way." So I became anxious about this and they helped me. They gave me a notebook and a pencil, and I went to the offices alone when no one was working, and I started to practice writing my name, and that's how I learned to sign . . . . After that, I tried to have my daughters help me with letters, and they helped with several letters, but I didn't have time to apply myself to it.

The second kind of written language she encountered involved cleaning desks. When I asked her if she had had any need or problems in this work that had to do with reading and writing, she told me,

> Well, yes there were, but I collected [trash] from all of the desks. I didn't throw away any of the paper on a desk, though. I left the paper arranged on the desk. I cleaned the telephones, the desk pads, and then I placed the paper there afterwards. When the owner of the desk came back, they then threw away what they didn't want. I left everything because I didn't understand any of it . . . . That way I managed very well not to call attention to myself.

She also described how she learned to use cleaning products which had written instructions: "The secretary would tell me, 'You have to put gloves on because that product is too strong for your hands.' So I would ask her that, and she would tell me how to use it."

Manuel is literate in Spanish, but when I asked him about reading and writing at work, he said he has washed dishes for six years for a restaurant and says that he needs no help from anyone and no instructions. He looks forward, however, to when he can quit such low paying work after he gets landed immigrant status so that he can attend English classes which will then lead to a better job.

Rebeca and María both anticipate having to work. I asked Rebeca and María what reading and writing they thought they would need in the jobs they hoped to get. María told me that she wants to find work as soon as possible to get her family free from government assistance. But she feels she does not necessarily need to take time to study before finding work. She told me,

> [Because we have to "defend" the children], I want [my husband] to study, to learn a bit, because if not, neither he nor I [will be able to "defend" the children] . . . . So, I intend to work this way [without more schooling], because I know I don't need it. I know I can get along this way.

But María has not yet found work. She said that what she needs more

than reading and writing is to be able to talk in English, so she can understand what she is told. But rather than going to English classes, she would like to "learn one or two things in order to be able to get along, to get work which pays something because with three children, to keep them in shoes, and pay the rent." She is a meatcutter by trade but finds that it is difficult to get into such a trade here, not because of her lack of English and literacy skills, but because there is little entrance for women into the meatcutting trade here in Canada.

Rebeca, on the other hand, has a strong desire to learn to read and write in Spanish so that she can learn English in order to have access to good employment. She hopes to find a job in the food services or catering industry. She described the kinds of reading and writing she anticipates having to do:

> In the cafeteria it's necessary to be able to write, not just speak [English]. If they send a shipment, or if someone makes a requisition, you have to read it, no? If you go to ask what somebody wants to eat, you have to write it down--as a waitress. Those two things you need, according to the woman at the restaurant which pays $7.

These descriptions of the kinds of reading and writing encountered on the job suggest that work related literacy often involves specific and limited sets of vocabulary and skills, almost entirely in English. Pedro, for example must regularly identify and mark a limited variety of bottles and lids contained in boxes. The set of individual English words he is required to recognize and to write is not large. Angela reads English only to improve standard dishes she already knows how to cook. Juan sees a variety of simple signs and sets of instructions which he learned when he first started work. And Juan looks for one word--superintendent.

The jobs described by the people I talked to do not, of course, make up a good sample of the spectrum of different job situations that exist in Toronto, especially the higher paying jobs to which the people I talked to all aspire (with the exception, perhaps, of María). But the way in which Juan, the most bilingual and literate person in my sample, needs little reading or writing for his job, and the way in which Pedro and Angela can both perform their duties by learning a limited set of task-specific English literacy skills suggest that extensive and generalized literacy skills are not used on a regular basis as part of these kinds of jobs. And the way in which Pedro and Angela successfully deal with the English reading that they do encounter at work, primarily

with the help of fellow workers who help them learn and explain new vocabulary to them, suggests that the literacy skills that are required can be effectively learned on the job. Pedro depends on Spanish-speaking fellow workers and Angela occasionally asks her daughter or other Spanish- speaking friends to translate for her at work. But for the more routine, day to day work, she learns the spoken and written English her job requires as the need arises either on her own or from the other kitchen staff.

CHURCH

Most of those I interviewed identified the church, and other religious domains, as places where they encountered reading and writing. Angela and Doña Ana described practices in the Catholic churches they sometimes attended in South America. Angela described the reading she encountered at churches in Ecuador:

> I liked the Stations of the Cross that churches always have--to read the miracles of the Saints, the Stations of the Cross, and the names of the Saints, the feast days of the Church. Also the books for listening to Mass. When they celebrate Mass, everyone reads. They put out Bibles and Prayerbooks for everyone. It's the same here. It's for those who don't know the prayers, no? I'm one of those. I like the Mass, but I don't know it entirely, at least not now, but only the main parts such as the elevation of the chalice and the elevation of the Sacred Host. One knows these parts. But now, even more than before, now that they've changed the Church so much, it's now necessary for one to read. One must follow the book because everything's new.

Doña Ana told me that she often went to Mass in Venezuela, but that all she could do was listen. To a question I asked about the kind of reading that happened in the church services she attended, she responded, "There were books there, yes, but I never touched them. My daughter would use them--missal books, hymnbooks, whatever program, she would read them."

Manuel, Rebeca, and Dona Lucía regularly attend churches in Toronto (Quaker, Pentecostal, and Mormon). Rebeca identified some of the specific kinds of reading which are used in churches when she described some of the reading problems she encounters at the church she attends. She told me several times, for example, that she wants to learn Spanish so that she can participate in church services, like those "who know." She gave the example of Bible reading:

> The pastor says, "If you would like to follow the reading in such and such a chapter." He says the numbers and the verses. He reads, and the people who have Bibles, and who know how to look up the passages quickly, look for it. That's why I want to learn Spanish,

> because then I will be able to do that as well, right? look it up quickly. It's no problem at all for those who know. //

She also described some specific kinds of literacy skills required for using hymnbooks:

> To read the hymns, I'm now learning some of them. But it's not easy, because they have two types of hymnbooks in the church I go to on Sunday. One of [the books] is different because the songs have to be sung differently, and the other in a different way. The green book has the ones that most can sing. And sitting down to sing--I know--I don't need to see the songs to sing them because I know them now. But the other songs in the white hymnbook, those are difficult because the letters are like that, right? and they have all those little sticks attached like that and I don't understand what they're for. I know the songs in the green book by memory, but I can also follow them in the book because they don't have those other marks. And the words are in typewritten letters. But the white book has those marks and those different letters--they write them with a different machine, right? but what I understand are the other letters [in the green book].

Rebeca's account of the hymnbooks and Bible reading demonstrates that the church domain, much like other domains described above, requires its own specific set of literacy skills, such as being able to use scripture references to find passages, and the ability to read various kinds of hymnbooks which come in a variety of fonts and formats (with or without music scores).

The church domain in many ways is distinct from other domains. For the people I interviewed, the church domain, unlike most other domains, operates exclusively in Spanish. In one sense, this provides a welcome escape from the English-language obstacles encountered in most of the other domains. In another sense, however, an all Spanish-language public context of this sort also reproduces Latin American class distinctions which are often leveled in English-language domains. Rebeca once commented, when we were talking about the kind of treatment she received from the better educated Hispanos at a church gathering, that Canada, unlike her country, does not grant the better educated Hispanos special privileges.

Another characteristic of the church domain which makes it somewhat different from other contexts is that the reading takes place in the context of group participation in religious practices. This reading is therefore very public, which makes it difficult to hide, week after week, that one cannot participate like the others. Rebeca's and Doña Ana's descriptions of reading practices at church reveal a strong sensitivity to the fact that they could not participate as "those who know." Unlike

many of the other domains, church is a situation where one cannot ask a family member or a friend to do the singing and responsive reading for one. One must either know things from memory, the way Rebeca knows many of the hymns, and the way Angela knows parts of the traditional Mass, or one must sit, as Doña Ana observed, tranquilito in order not to draw attention, and listen while those who know how to read participate fully in the services.

The church domain, then, for those I interviewed, is an exclusively Spanish-language setting which requires kinds of literacy practices unique to the activities which take place in that particular domain. Somewhat like the classroom domain, some of the strategies used in other domains cannot be used in church services, with the exception, perhaps, of a reliance on memory. The public nature of church and the significance attached to religious literacy practices by many of the people in my sample suggests that people's perceptions of literacy in this domain contributes to the social structuring of this particular domain. But this reveals a subjective side to literacy, which is the topic of the following chapter, and will be dealt with in more detail there.

CONCLUSION

The domain by domain description above has provided an overview of the data I gathered. The objective has been to provide, not detailed and exhaustive descriptions of various literacy environments, but a sense of the range of domains in which the people I interviewed encounter written language. Literacy operates at many levels in social settings and requires a complex array of details in any description of how it articulates with those settings. The way I structured the descriptions in this chapter has provided an initial level of analysis by focusing (1) on specific characteristics such as the particular reading and writing skills that are part of different domains (from using withdrawal slips to reading different kinds of hymnbooks), and (2) on the ways in which Spanish and English interact or are used in the reading and writing associated with the different domains. These details serve to differentiate between kinds of reading and writing which the people I interviewed face in different domains.

The amount of attention I have given to the description of a given domain reflects how much the people I interviewed talked about that particular domain. As I pointed out in the section on signs around the

city, for example, those I interviewed do not seem to bother much with the written language that appears prominently on billboards, and in buses and subways. Consequently, I paid only brief attention to it. One kind of reading which I did not describe because little was said about it has to do with reading for leisure. Angela and Doña Ana both remarked, for example, that their children read Spanish novels and westerns. But they also both said they never bothered even finding out what was in those books because they were too busy working. Juan and Pedro also briefly mentioned that in El Salvador, after they moved to the city, they would sometimes go to the theater to watch a movie, which required one to read Spanish subtitles. But here they see few movies with subtitles. All of the other people I talked to told me that they do not go to movies. Thus, with the exception of the newspaper and magazine reading I described above, reading for leisure is not a kind of reading that the people I interviewed have others do for them. Consequently, I did not include it as a category in this chapter

I also have not devoted much attention to literacy in the workplace. Unlike billboards and signs, it is a domain that is very important to all of the people in my sample, and it will enter the discussion again in the next chapter, but few were able to give many details about written language in the workplace. The second language classroom, however, is a domain that many of my informants described in detail. They were also able to provide many details about the correspondence they receive and send, about how they get around the city, and about how they interact with bureaucracies. Consequently, I devoted more attention to these domains.

A number of other general observations should also be made about the findings reported above. It has become clear that the people I interviewed find it possible to operate reasonably effectively in many of the domains with few literacy and/or English skills. The second language classroom seems to be one of the primary exceptions as a particularly inaccessible domain for Hispano non-literates. They can shop, move around the city, deal with bureaucracies, and get letters written and read for them in the other domains, but in many classrooms, those who cannot read and write in standard Spanish experience strong feelings of helplessness.

The relation that second language skills have to the reading and writing skills encountered in different domains and between individuals

emerges as a complex issue. Angela's Spanish literacy skills do not help her fill out English application forms, for health insurance premium assistance, for instance, which in effect makes it necessary for her to ask for help much as María, who is non-literate in Spanish, must also ask for help. And yet, like María, she is reasonably satisfied not to be able to read and write in English. What she needs she learns at work and thereby avoids the classroom. It is interesting to note that she has found the ESL classroom inaccessible regardless of her Spanish reading and writing skills. This issue will come up again.

Yet other people in my sample feel that Spanish literacy is very useful, not only for learning English in the second language classroom, however, but also for reading and writing letters, reading newspapers, and deciphering English bills and street names. Prices, bus numbers, and telephone numbers also operate in Spanish, not in English, for these people. The one exception is the need in banking to write the English word for the amount of money on a cheque or withdrawal form. Spanish is also often encountered in the workplace, and the English reading and writing practices that were part of the jobs described to me involve limited and specific skills, such as identifying spices or boxes.

I will now move to a more interpretive analysis of the findings I have described above. What has continually emerged as part of the descriptions in this chapter are the practices the people use to participate within the various domains. These practices will receive more detailed analysis in the next chapter as I move the analysis away from describing whole domains to focus on the individuals themselves. The analysis will become more subjective as I begin to explore the way the individuals interpret and understand the place of written language in the various domains they are in.

CHAPTER 4--DISCUSSION: MANAGING LITERACIES

In the previous chapter, I described what I discovered about the written language that my informants felt was characteristic of the various domains they routinely encounter. I noted which kinds of literacy skills were used and how Spanish and English were used in those domains. I now move to a more interpretive level of analysis and begin to discuss some of the themes and patterns which can be seen to emerge from the findings which I reported in chapter 3.

Although new information will be included in this chapter, I will depend heavily on information provided in the previous chapter to illustrate some of the relationships that emerge from the data which have not as yet been discussed in detail. The result is that I will not only be using much of the same information in a different analytical framework, but I will also be summarizing the statements and episodes reported earlier rather than requoting the actual statements at length.

Two somewhat contradictory themes in particular emerge from the findings I reported in chapter 3. These two themes are contained in the word managing, a word I use in the title of this chapter. There are two ways--one with positive connotations and the other with negative connotations--in which this word can be used in English which rather accurately reflect the two somewhat contradictory sides to how the people I interviewed seem to deal with written language. One way in which the word managing is often used in English is in reference to organizing resources to achieve certain ends. The first part of this chapter deals with this kind of management in terms of the array of strategies which the people I interviewed use, often effectively, to deal with written language.

In the second half of this chapter, entitled "Functions of Literacy," I discuss perceptions my informants have of written language in their everyday lives. I divide this section into two parts--positive indications of function (the uses they attribute to reading and writing), and negative indications of function (the exclusion and limitations they feel). The overriding theme which emerges in this section is that the people I interviewed tend to place high value on reading and writing skills (which many of them lack), and they see their own strategies to be inadequate and limiting--a matter of barely managing with imperfect means. This reflects the second way in which the word managing is often used in English. It implies struggling to stay afloat. And this metaphor of struggle reflects the way in which my informants tend to

perceive written language to operate in their lives regardless of how effectively they use other strategies to deal with written language. I will begin this chapter, however, by describing these strategies.

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING LITERACIES

When describing literacy in a particular domain, as mentioned in the conclusion to the previous chapter, there are both the written products (kinds of written material) and the written language practices to describe. The practices which people engage in to use and produce those written materials are not limited, however, to acts of reading and writing, particularly in the case of people who have few reading and writing skills. They find other ways to deal with written language, or to accomplish ends which literates use reading and writing to achieve.

I have entitled this section on literacy practices "Strategies for Managing Literacies" partly because the individuals I interviewed bring to bear a number of strategies to help them manage the written language they encounter with few reading and writing skills. These strategies include asking others to do the reading and writing, using limited forms of literacy, depending on memory, experimenting, and avoiding literacy dependent situations. I will begin with the strategy which came up most frequently in the interviews--asking others to do the reading and writing.

Scribes

Almost all of the people in my sample depend on others to write and/or to read for them. Even Juan, who is the most literate and fluent in English of those I interviewed, must occasionally ask someone to help him with some of the papers which come from the government. Some, like Angela, only depend on others in their everyday lives when the language is English. Others, like María, Doña Ana, and Rebeca, depend on a network of people to do most if not all of their reading and writing for them, regardless of the language. But it is not simply a matter of asking just anyone. It requires the development of ties with others--a social network of friends and trusted contacts.

Various criteria emerged from the data which the people I interviewed use to decide whom they ask to help them. Family members provide an important starting point. As described above, María often depends on her husband to read English instructions, prescriptions, appointment cards, and bills for her and to write Spanish letters for her. The children read newspapers to her in both English and Spanish. Rebeca's children

do much of the reading and writing for her. Doña Ana said that her children would always read for her when she lived in Venezuela.

But two other criteria emerge which narrow the choices down even in the family. One was mentioned earlier in relation to María's children; often the reading and writing is either too difficult or the related task is seen as too important to entrust to the imperfect reading and writing skills of immediate family members. Thus María says,

> I ask for help from my brother-in-law, or from his son too--they know a lot. Or I wait for my children to come home for lunch. But to be more sure, I go to this other gentleman because he has studied a lot of English.

Similarly, Rebeca observed in relation to reading report cards, "My son, the oldest, because he is learning the language, it's possible that he could misread it, so I take it to a person who knows the entire language. Then I feel more secure." Thus, they will look for help outside of the immediate family when the reading and writing requires more knowledgeable scribes.

The other criterion which narrows the choices down even in the family has to do with the willingness of individual family members to help. Rebeca, for example, does not often depend on her son to help her because she does not find him particularly willing to help. It is her daughter she usually asks to read and write for her both in Spanish and in English. Doña Ana indicated the same preference. One of her daughters, in particular, helped her more than her other children. Similarly, María mentioned once that she did not want to indicate that her husband was not helpful, but sometimes he did not have interest in things. She feels, however, that "I should not obligate him to [write letters] for me, because he is often tired after spending all day at the English class."

The preference for asking favours from individuals who are more disposed to help extends outside of the family as well. Rebeca, Doña Ana, and María all described how they have depended on other women who have become close friends. Doña Ana explains how, because here in Toronto her son often does not have time to read and write for her, when her friends arrive at her apartment, she says,

> "Look, these letters arrived," and then they read them to me. And if my son doesn't have time to write a letter for me, I say to my friend, "Look, write this for me because I'm going to send it." So then she writes it for me. I have many good friends . . . . I have some good friends from Chile, I have them from Ecuador, marvelous people, and from El Salvador.

The same was true of Montreal. She said that, because her son and

daughter-in-law were often busy, she developed a circle of friends from her French class who helped her with reading and writing and helped her learn how to get around the city.

I reported earlier María's account of how a neighbor woman in Guatemala became a good friend and would read the Bible to her. This friend would also read the newspaper to her and help her make lists and keep weekly accounts of the money she spent. Rebeca related that when she lived in El Salvador, because her children were too young to help her and her husband was often away working, she depended on neighbors to read and write letters, and to read recipes and the calendar for her. Here in Canada, she said, "I wait for my daughter because my neighbors are Canadian and don't speak Spanish so they can't read letters for me." But she does depend on an Ecuadorian friend to inform her about sales and special offers she finds in newspapers. This friend, according to Rebeca,

> "has helped me a lot in Canada because I got to know her at school . . . She told me, 'When there's a special on, do you want me to call you?' I said, 'Yes, of course . . .'"

It is interesting to note that the people I interviewed who go to ESL classes tend to find in their fellow classmates one of the better resources of willing help. Rebeca once remarked about the Colombian and Ecuadorian women in her class, "They help me and I help them, because in that way we make an exchange."

All of those in my sample have required the services of professional scribes at some time. Those I interviewed indicated that they have different preferences as to which offices they go to for help. María goes frequently to Manpower and Welcome House counselors whereas Rebeca avoids those offices. Rebeca proudly told me that she went to government offices for only five weeks after she arrived. Since then she has managed to avoid them. Juan and Pedro also rarely use these government offices, but it is partly because they do not have the same government sponsored refugee status that Rebeca and María have. Angela also avoids social services offices partly because she entered Canada illegally but also because, as she told the Manpower counselor, "I want to work; I won't live off of others like a beggar." Juan and Pedro depend more on working things out themselves or, as a final measure, going to the church agency which sponsored them.

It is also particularly important to the people I interviewed to know people in the offices they go to. María referred to the counselors she

sees at Welcome House and at the Manpower office by name, and talked about interacting with them in terms of going to ask for favours. Several of the people I interviewed mentioned getting to know specific tellers in banks. Carlos described how he does his banking in the following way,

> When I go to take out money, no? there's a Canadian woman, no? We get along well. She knows some Spanish . . . I always ask for her when I'm at the bank.

Rebeca says of her bank, "The workers there help me . . . they understand me." And Angela told me, "I go alone. They understand me there now. In the bank they know me now." In a later interview she told me, "They fill out the forms for me. They help, and all I do is sign. There is an Ecuadorian teller there."

The strategy of using scribes, then, involves fostering relationships with particular family members, friends, and professional people who are perceived to be willing to help. The difficulty finding scribes will come up again in the second half of this chapter.

Restricted Literacies

A second strategy involves minimal or restricted literacy practices which are developed out of specific needs. María's practice of copying down letters, words, and numbers in a notebook is a good example. When she explained to me how she remembered when to give medicine to her children by writing letters on the bottle, she observed, "Only in that way have I managed to get along. It drives me crazy the way I forget everything I need to do. 'Okay' I say, and I write it on the front [of the bottle]." If she does not make these markings, she told me, "I forget everything and do nothing." After finding that milk sometimes spoils soon after buying it at a bulk supermarket, Rebeca says she learned to read expiry dates because she can read the numbers. And both Doña Ana and Rebeca have learned to read the colours and parts of the station names on subway maps in order to get around the city better.

All of my informants use numbers well enough to shop. Even María, who has trouble recognizing certain written numbers, says that she can do the shopping. Signing one's name and copying the letters and numbers in one's address are other minimal forms of literacy which those with fewer literacy skills described doing themselves. Another limited form of literacy is recognizing items and places by "non-written" features of papers, containers, and signs. María, for example, said she recognizes cans of tomatoes by the pictures. Rebeca described how she recognizes

the pasta she buys, "I know the brand I buy there. The one I buy is the one that has several heads of wheat. I forget what it's called. I can't remember the name. It's the drawing." Angela prepares different salads in the cafeteria where she works partly by following the pictures in English magazines and cookbooks. Doña Ana told me she was able to sort much of the mail that came to her house in Caracas by the symbols on the envelopes. The telephone bill, for example, had a telephone on it, and the light bill had a little electric person as part of the logo. In the same way, María says she recognizes which card is the telephone bill, and can pay it without having to ask her husband to identify it for her.

Memory

The three remaining strategies that I will discuss consist of alternatives to reading and writing rather than indirect (using scribes) or partial (limited forms) uses of written language. These are memory, learning by experiment, and adapting to limited alternatives. I will start with memory. Rebeca and Doña Ana talked more frequently than the others about how they rely on memory. They shop, cook, and get around the city by keeping information in their heads. According to Doña Ana, for example, "I didn't have the need to make lists to shop because I depended on my head." She emphasized her ability to find her way around in Montreal also by using only her head. She told me, "By remembering and counting the stops . . . . Friends would need to show me only once, because then I would concentrate on doing it by myself." Rebeca also said that she can keep accounts in her head. She learned to do this, she told me, when she was growing up on her father's farm because "They sent me to run many of the errands and purchases, and everything had to stay with me from memory." Rebeca also said that she learned the English vocabulary for the first level ESL classes "by memory from hearing them."

Carlos talked about using memory as well. He claims to have a learning deficiency, and in the place of reading and writing, he uses his memory to find his way around the city, and to keep track of the hours he works, and what he should be getting paid. When he told me how he gets around the city by using landmarks, he remarked, "My memory, thank God, has helped me a lot." Only María complained about regularly forgetting what she needs to buy, or forgetting appointments because she loses the appointment cards. But she cooks by memory, and like the others, uses her memory (plus her booklet with copied numbers) to help her get around the city with few problems. She said, "It's not all that

difficult."

Experimenting

The strategy of learning by experimenting involves trying things. Rebeca, for example, experiments with different colours and shapes of cheeses until she finds the ones she likes. She said,

> The first time I bought it, I took it and said, "If it turns out good, I'll buy it again." So I did . . . . Sometimes I buy things and I say, "I'll see if it's good or not." I wouldn't know what it was called, and I buy it, and it turns out good.

Although Pedro and Juan can read the English words on the package labels, they also experiment with canned goods and other household products because they do not understand much of the vocabulary on the labels. They learn what to buy by experimenting with those products because, although they can usually successfully sound out the English words on the labels, they often do not understand the words. Pedro observed, "It's the same as if we couldn't read it." According to Juan, if he does not understand a label, "I buy it, but only one bottle, or a small amount, and I try it. And that's it. If I don't like it, I don't buy it."

Several of those in my sample told me that experimenting helps them learn to get around the city. Doña Ana identified as one of the reasons she learned to travel around Montreal so well was that "I got good and lost several times, but now I know. I think that turned out well for me because now I know much of the city very well." Pedro indicated a similar approach:

> Sometimes one has to ask for help. But, as I've been telling you, one has to keep trying until one learns one's self. Some say a person can't learn on their own, and needs someone to teach, no? But as I've been saying, by making mistakes, you learn. I go to look for something, and if I don't find it, I go and try again. But then if not, when I see it's impossible, then I ask.

A characteristic which I observed in the people I interviewed is the willingness to experiment and forge ahead. María demonstrated this attitude when she went immediately to look for her counselor at Welcome House rather than sit in the reception area and wait to be served. In another conversation she told me, "I don't keep quiet, and I don't stay around waiting for things to change. I like to stay on top of things to be sure that I don't have problems." What she said she needs in order to manage things even more than reading and writing is a quality she identified as <u>chispa</u>, a word which in Spanish means spark or confidence.

Rebeca and Doña Ana reflect this same quality of persistence and tireless activity which includes not only experimenting, but also the

active fostering of a network of social and professional connections as described in the section above on scribes. Rebeca told me that she learned to get around so well, even before she learned to read, because she could not sit at home and do nothing, the result, she felt, of having worked outside of the home most of her life, most recently in factories and cafeterias in Texas. Angela also mentioned that she had to get out of the house and work as she had done all of her life. Rebeca commented to me in one interview that she feels sorry for the immigrant women who must depend on their husbands to drive them where they need to go because these women have not learned to get around on their own.

Limiting One's Alternatives

This final strategy is almost the opposite of experimenting or trying things because it includes avoiding (or not bothering with) situations or items which require reading and writing. It involves finding a literacy activity too difficult to bother with. Pedro and María both commented, for example, that although they want to use dictionaries, they are too difficult to use. Pedro said that, because he often does not know the standard Spanish vocabulary, or the root words, "that makes it difficult for me. It's better not to look."

This strategy also involves making do without, as in María's description of how, although she occasionally will buy packaged food and have her husband read the instructions for her, usually it is simply better not to buy such products. She cooks without problems the way she has always cooked. In a similar way, when Juan told me that he sometimes tries small quantities when he does not understand the label of a product, he also said, "Sometimes I just don't buy it."

Doña Ana several times mentioned that, because she cannot read and write, she does not even pay attention to books or other written material around the house, or that she does not miss the ability to read shopping lists because she does not know how to write and therefore depends instead on her head. She used the word tranquilo several times in interviews to indicate how she prefers to leave things undisturbed, without bothering herself or others. When she encounters products in a supermarket that she does not recognize, for example, she says she leaves them tranquilo. Or she told me that, when she lived in Montreal, her son and daughter-in-law often had little time to read things for her. Rather than expecting them to take time, she said, she remained tranquila. With the television as well, she watched what they watched because she did not

know how to turn the set on or how to change the channels.

Near the end of the series of interviews I conducted with each person in my sample, I asked each person if there were other important kinds of reading and writing which we had not yet discussed. I asked this kind of question to elicit information I might have otherwise missed. Doña Ana responded to one of my questions about other situations in which she would have asked someone to help her read or write in the following way:

> Not many, because I would seldom leave the house for other things. Where I would run into such problems, I wouldn't leave the house. I would only leave to do some shopping or to run some errands, no more.

She also told me that, when she lived in Maracaibo, she always minded her own business and consciously avoided problems "so that such situations would not come my way." She often sent one of her daughters to church functions to which she had received an invitation, for example, because she said that it was better for her daughter, who had some schooling, to go. When she went to Mass, she told me, "Yes, I would have liked to read there, but since I didn't know how, I kept tranquilito [very quiet or unassuming]. I arrived silently, I listened, and then I left again."

Summary of Strategies

The people I interviewed use the strategies I described above to participate in many of the domains which make up their everyday lives. The strategies are used in lieu of the Spanish and English literacy skills literate people use in the same situations. It is interesting to note that they all rely on similar strategies at some point, regardless of the level of literacy and second language skills they do possess, because none possesses the range or level of skills necessary to undertake all of the reading and writing they encounter. Thus, they look for others who they deem willing to help them, or they can get by with basic levels of numeracy and restricted forms of literacy. They can also often make do without literacy skills by using memory, or venturing out and learning by experience, and achieving ends by being persistent in the fostering of friendships and professional contacts. Or, they simply get along without items or by avoiding situations which require kinds of reading and writing skills they do not possess.

As mentioned in the introduction to this section, however, there is also a subjective side to the strategies people use to manage literacy. The people I talked to have certain perceptions both about literacy and about the strategies they use to deal with the reading and writing they

encounter. This raises the issue of the functions of literacy.

PERCEIVED FUNCTIONS OF LITERACY

As explained in chapter 1, I borrow the concept of functions from the field of sociolinguistics. What I mean by "functions" of literacy has to do with the place the people in question themselves give to literacy in their way of seeing, valuing, and interpreting. Different individuals and groups attach their own configurations or webs of meanings to written language and these meanings have a determining influence on the way written language is encountered and utilized in their lives. Thus, it is not only written language itself that is at issue here, but also all that is associated with it.

Identifying and discussing functions of literacy requires an analysis of the subjective dimension. To explore some of the features which characterize the way in which the individuals in my sample view written language in their lives, I will pursue two tacks. The first is a positive approach in that I attempt to identify the range of uses my informants see reading and writing to have, both actual and desired, in their everyday lives. The uses a form of literacy is perceived to have is an important aspect of function because the purposes written language is seen to achieve in everyday life suggest not only what written language is seen to be good for, but also how much those uses are valued. The second tack is a more negative approach in that I focus on restrictions and inadequacies those I talked to feel that they have as individuals and the forms of exclusion they describe. But first, the positive tack.

Positive Functions: Uses

Identifying uses for written language can be seen as one way of evaluating perceived needs and wants. In the course of the interviews, I asked various kinds of questions to elicit information on uses the people in my sample have for written language. I asked, for example, what they would get people to read and write for them in different domains because what they ask people to help them with suggests uses they have for reading and writing. Also, when an informant would identify a specific kind of reading and writing in a given domain, using the telephone book, for example, I would explicitly ask what use it was to them, or to their friends and family members who used it. I also asked hypothetical questions about what they would read or write if they could.

These categories of uses for reading and writing roughly parallel the

different domains I described in the previous chapter. This is not surprising both because I structured the interviews by asking questions domain by domain, but also because kinds of reading and writing are frequently domain-specific. Uses will therefore also often be somewhat specific to the domains in which they appear. Uses also tend to overlap, however, and occur together, but for purposes of analysis and description, I have divided them into four categories which emerged as recurrent themes in conversations about uses for reading and writing. These categories are Managing Everyday Tasks, Learning, Being Informed, and Communicating.

Managing Everyday Tasks

One everday use for literacy is as a memory aid to help one organize such activities as shopping and keeping appointments. María in particular requires literacy for this purpose. She told me that, rather than having the need to write in English,

> if I could write in Spanish, it would be better for me. For example, I would be able to properly mark down the things I mark down rather than in the half done way I do it now--on the calendar, in my notebook, a list of what I have to buy. Sometimes I lose track of the money I spend. I would like to keep account of how much money I spend from week to week.

Another example she gave me of what she could do if she could write has to do with calendars:

> And I've been telling you with examples what I go through in order not to lose the appointments I have to go to. That is the only way I don't forget, because if I simply try to read the appointment cards, I can't read them. I end up knowing no more after trying.

Other examples of literacy-based memory aids include writing down numbers of buses to remember which bus to take, taking down orders (as Rebeca expects to have to do in restaurant work), and keeping lists of phone numbers in note books. Rebeca identified hymn singing as an activity for which she would have liked to know how to read. "All of those hymns," she told me, "to know them by memory is difficult." Most of the uses for literacy mentioned above involve Spanish rather than English literacy skills.

A related instrumental use for literacy is following instructions, on the signs in Juan's factory, for example, or on prescriptions and recipes. Rebeca told me that one thing she would have liked to have been able to read in El Salvador "were the medicines, because notice how I had to pay such close attention when they explained it to me." A related but distinctive use for literacy involves the ability to use maps to navigate

around the bus and subway system.

One additional instrumental use for literacy is to identify objects and places. This use includes both marking items for others to identify as well as reading names in order to identify objects and places. Pedro, for example, is required to both write and read labels to do his job (recognizing and marking contents on boxes and bottle labels). Angela told me that she sometimes marks containers of spices with Spanish names to help her identify them in the kitchen where she works. María provided another job related example of using writing to mark items. She told me that in Guatemala she occasionally hired several young men who could read and write to help her in busy seasons with her meat cutting business. They would mark the quantity of meat for specific orders as well as the places those orders were to go.

In Toronto, a particularly good example of the need to read to identify places is the subway system. María, Carlos, Rebeca, and Doña Ana all reported that the subways are difficult to use unless one knows how to read the station names, signs, and maps.

One of María's main reasons for wanting to be able to read is in order to identify words when shopping or getting around in the city. She explained this use for literacy particularly in terms of how Spanish and English merge in the way she would use reading. She told me:

> So that's what's difficult for me, not knowing how to read Spanish and not knowing any English. In other words, it's that I need to know how to read Spanish as well as know a bit of English in the supermarket . . . . But what happens, because I don't know how to read, not even in Spanish, I can't even try to decipher the letters in English words, because knowing how to read in Spanish, I could manage to follow the letters that are written in English, even if it's the wrong pronunciation, but one at least would understand.

In another place she said, "Knowing how to read Spanish, I would have an advantage because then I could at least decipher the English words. Many do it that way." Thus, she feels that she only needs Spanish literacy for this use of identifying items in supermarkets and places on the transit system.

Managing bureaucracies is another instrumental use for a number of specific literacy skills such as paper management, name signing, and form filling. These instrumental uses associated with bureaucracies could be considered as a category on their own. Perhaps one of the primary roles for literacy under such a category is the role of authorization or validation. Although María's and Rebeca's homework checking practices

of placing X's or a signature on assignments do not occur in bureaucratic settings, they provide a simple example of using writing to control and validate. María remarked about her practice of marking X's on assignments, "That's how I manage to get control. Now they can't trick me because I say, 'Look, I marked this here yesterday.'" Another more official example is María's practice of going to a Manpower office to get a voucher which authorizes her to get medications from a drugstore. Rebeca described how she needed to have her son fill in a request for new apartment keys, but that her signature must appear on the request to validate the form because the maintenance office at the apartment complex where she lives requires that requisitions be signed by the head of the household. Doña Ana gave another example. She needed to go to the American consulate to get authorization to enter the U.S. To prove her status in Canada, she was required to present the proper documents.

I gave other examples earlier of how written language is required in bureaucratic settings. Documents, for example, are essential for accomplishing, as Doña Ana remarked, "many things." She mentioned a variety of documents she has had to use in her life time--birth certificates, identification card (cèdula), military service booklets for her sons, a passport, and visas. Carlos carries his work permission papers on him to show to police on late night security checks at work.

Manuel, Juan, and Pedro are all waiting for landed immigrant status because such documents represent official acceptance and the means to surmounting obstacles placed in the way of their work and study plans, and the opportunity to begin to help family left behind. Manuel views the paperwork and ultimate written permission to remain in the country as a ticket to access to ESL programs, training, and better work. Pedro and Juan view the paperwork they are engaged in as the means to their goal of helping members of their immediate family, their mother in particular, who needs medical attention she cannot get in El Salvador. Angela described having to go to her bank to ask for a letter documenting her financial position so that she could invite one of her sons to come to Canada. Somebody at the bank wrote the letter for her.

Other people in my sample also described the kind of paperwork needed, not only to be allowed to work, but also to actually get work, and then to get paid for work. Although no one in my sample described having to fill out application forms, Pedro, Juan, and Rebeca mentioned learning (or needing to learn) how to fill in employment application forms. María

discovered that a "declaration of income" form created an obstacle to getting paid for casual labour. Doña Ana needed to learn to sign her name to get paid at her cleaning job in Venezuela. There are also forms that have to do with not having work. Juan described learning to fill out welfare tickets and Angela described needing to apply for temporary health care insurance premium assistance when she was not getting paid.

The fact that reading and writing would be useful for managing bureaucratic requirements goes without saying. The way, however, that much of the reading and writing itself is done by scribes or requires only copying names and addresses, or providing the correct pieces of identification regardless of language differences, however, suggest that the ability to read and write well in Spanish or English is not essential to dealing with bureaucracies. María demonstrates that it is possible to take care of many of these bureaucratic necessities without many reading and writing skills in Spanish or in English. She feels that it is more important to be able to talk in English, and even this is not absolutely necessary. Rather, what is required, she says, is persistence, or as described earlier, the quality called chispa (spark). What is also required is the time to make multiple trips to offices to arrange appointments and spend hours sitting in reception areas often followed by more trips to other offices. María believes that it makes more sense for her than for her husband or children to take care of this business because they should not take time from their studies to sit and wait in offices. María told me, "With the problems I face, with my needs, there is very little that I must read, in English. To communicate with people, it is speaking that I need." Then she said, "You can see that only with a little effort I manage to do everything without speaking [English] or writing. To solve the problems I have, even though I have to bother the people, that's how I arrange things." In another conversation, she told me, "I don't keep quiet, and I don't stay around waiting for things to change. I like to stay on top of things to be sure that I don't have problems."

Thus, many of the specific instrumental uses for literacy that the people I interviewed identified seem to involve simple forms of literacy that do not require a knowledge of English, such as copying words and numbers, and signing. These uses often require little more than recognition of numbers and individual letters and an active fostering of a pool of scribes.

Learning

Earlier, I described in some detail the kinds of reading and writing different people in my sample encountered in ESL classes. Several of them identified specific learning related (or heuristic) uses reading and writing in Spanish have for learning English. For example, Pedro identified the need to know alphabetical sequence, and Spanish grammatical and spelling rules in order to be able to use a Spanish-English dictionary. Rebeca told me that she had observed how those who know how to read and write in their own languages learn English quickly (rápido se aprenden). Doña Ana also identified the usefulness of knowing how to write in Spanish for learning English. She told me that she sometimes goes to a library to listen to English language records, but that, unlike those who "know," nothing remains with her because she knows nothing. So I asked her what the others who use those records can do that she cannot do. She told me:

> Well then, it would be everything because it would be like, let's say here there are three others. They sit here. You would seat yourself here, put on your record, and then start to study, to note down what you are hearing. I can't do that. It's that nothing stays with me. I just sit and listen. All the others write what they're hearing. I write nothing. I just hear it, and nothing stays.

Rebeca also used the example of Bible studies to explain how those who could read learn more than she can:

> The one who doesn't know, then, as in my case, I only sit and listen. And the ones who know quickly say "Which chapter?" and they start to read silently, right? It's that they understand what it's saying. They read and find out.

She also described how writing helped "those who know" learn from the Bible Studies:

> Many who came, who knew, they had with them a sheet of paper or a notebook and they copied down what he wrote down on the board. It was important. If I could, I also would do that because that way one doesn't forget. Because he takes those passages from the Bible--those Bible references. They write them down. It's important to know one's language because many places you can see others writing it that way, and I'd like to do that. It was in order to learn more about the Bible. And then in your own house you could also do that.

In her comments above, Rebeca identifies another heuristic use for being able to write things down--it allows one to study independently at home. In another interview, she made a similar comment about the fact that the ability to write in Spanish makes it possible for people to

study English at home:

> Those who know can write--like, above it's in English and below, at the end of the word, they write it in Spanish . . . . And when they get home, they can study, and because she [a fellow student] could already write in Spanish, it worked well for her.

María made a similar remark about the link between the ability to study and the ability to read:

> . . . . knowing how to read, I'd be able to follow the letters in a dictionary, study, take a few minutes aside to study with it. But because I can't, I don't have even the desire to sit down and try it, because I can't. And I remain the same as before--no difference.

The examples I have given focus on Spanish reading and writing. The people I interviewed perceived Spanish literacy to be an important tool for learning, not only English, but also other things. But they also identified ways in which English reading and writing have heuristic value primarily for learning English. María told me that her husband reads the English newspaper in order to improve his English. She also told me that she does not mind her children reading toy advertisements to her, "because that way they learn--working out the letters, they learn." I asked her in one interview what use the English newspapers and magazines in her living room have. She told me that her family "practices" English with them:

> They try to work out the letters and that way they learn to speak a bit. And my little girl, it has really helped her with English. She tries to understand what's said there, and she tries to copy it.

What I have described above are specific heuristic uses for literacy identified by those I interviewed. But my informants also made much more sweeping and generalized associations to literacy and learning. I will discuss these more general associations between literacy skills and learning (or learned people) in the second half of this chapter which deals with the more implicit values and associations revealed by the contrasts and inadequacies expressed by my informants. But here I will briefly highlight the issue.

It became clear in the interviews that the people in my sample associate literacy in a general way with employment, status, and culture. Pedro, for example, explained in some detail what others implied--that English reading and writing is important for getting the training necessary for good employment. He asked me to help him find a mathematics book written in English so that he could learn mathematics while at the same time practice English to help him in his goal of

getting training in a trade. He said he was not interested in learning theory, but in the mathematics and English necessary to learn a technical trade. María suggested a similar line of reasoning, not for herself, but for her husband. She wants to free him up so that he can learn English and enter a training program which will qualify him for better paying jobs.

My informants also link learning and literacy to status. This is suggested by the way most of them spoke of themselves as knowing nothing in comparison to "those who know." The explicit reference is to those who know how to read and write, but the implicit assumption is that those who know how to read and write are educated, or schooled. Those I interviewed consistently referred to literates, not only as los que saben (those who know), but also as those who are estudiados (who have studied).

In summary, then, literacy has specific heuristic uses for the people in my sample. They see Spanish reading and writing skills as being useful, not only for helping them learn (English, a trade, religious knowledge, and standard Spanish), but also allowing them to study independently at home. They see English reading and writing as being useful practice for learning English and they associate it quite narrowly with employment. Literacy also has a more generalized value in its association with education and status, an issue which I address again near the end of this chapter.

Being Informed

Two expressions my informants frequently used were enterarse and darse cuenta (being informed or aware of things). The contexts in which they used these words include Pedro's reference to reading the bulletin board and newsletter at work, María's description of how she tries to keep informed about the bills and notices which come in the mail, and multiple references by most of those interviewed to newspapers, television, and radio.

Rebeca, Doña Ana, and María in separate interviews each mentioned that, if they knew how to read and write, they would read newspapers and write letters. After Doña Ana told me, for example, that she managed to get along well without reading skills wherever she happened to be, I asked her if reading, then, was of any use to her. She said:

> Yes it is, because there are many things I could do if I could read--write letters to send to my children . . . . I'd also read the newspaper, become informed about what's happening.

I will discuss letter writing in the next section under the heading "communicating". But it is important to point out here that letters are important sources of information. As María says of the letters she gets from Guatemala, "me entero de muchas cosas" (I become informed about many things). What those I talked to wanted to be aware of include current events (usually through Spanish papers), advertisements and specials (usually in English papers), and the classifieds (jobs, house and furniture sales, and professional services--both in English and Spanish papers). Two recurrent themes emerged from the interviews--the usefulness of being informed about what is happening, and a preference for print media over electronic media.

Most of those I interviewed talked about wanting to be informed about what is happening. María told me that her family buys the Spanish newspaper "for the news, in order to know what's happened in the Latin countries." She also said, "I would like to be able to read the written announcements that go across the television, the notices, that they put in writing." Rebeca gave the example of the Chernobyl nuclear accident to describe the usefulness of reading in English:

> If I knew how to read in English, I'd buy the newspaper, to know about the news . . . . The people who buy those [tabloids] it's very useful to them, because they can read to find out about the news and what's happening . . . . Right now all the fruit is contaminated. So I'm being careful with vegetables and fruit. "Don't eat it now," he says, "because you'll die of cancer." That's what my son tells me, because my children understand when the news comes on the television.

Doña Ana offered another reason for wanting to be informed--to be able to have things to talk about with people. She said, "I like very much to be aware of things, of whatever story from the previous day, so that I can talk about it, in order to have a base to talk from." María suggested a similar social domain in which newspapers had a role in conversation. Her neighbor in Guatemala, she said, would read from the Bible or newspaper when they had some free time and that "we would have good conversations."

Several of my informants claimed to prefer the newspaper to radio or television as sources of information. Rebeca gave two reasons for why she would have preferred to have been able to read the newspaper rather than listen to the radio when she lived in El Salvador. One of the reasons has to do with the wider scope of information contained in newspapers. She said:

> On the radio they gave the news. The newspaper had a lot of importance to me, but because I didn't know, I couldn't use it . . . . Also, job notices, specials, and house sales came out in the papers. That's why it was important to me to find out what was in it, because everything came out in the newspaper.

Doña Ana gave a similar reason:

> If I could read the newspaper, I'd prefer it to the radio, because then I'd be able to work out what was said by the words in order to make myself aware of the prices, where there are specials to go and buy. The radio doesn't help me with that.

Rebeca's second reason reveals a finer distinction:

> On the radio they tell things in one way, and in the newspaper its in a different way. So, I would have liked to know how because then I would have been able to say, "Here they are saying one thing, but on the radio they said something else." That's why those who know how to read would say, "No, don't even pay attention to the radio because it's not the way they say it in the paper." People trust newspapers more than they trust those who announce on the radio.

It is clear, then, that the people I interviewed place a high value on being informed. It involves not only "knowing" for practical reasons such as shopping and paying the bills, but also having access to the variety and apparent reliability of the printed news. Spanish reading, in particular, seems to be the medium they prefer to use for this purpose. Thus, many of those I talked to feel that an important use for written language is as a source of reliable information. It involves being informed for practical reasons such as shopping and paying the bills, as well as being informed about the wide range of information that other news media do not provide.

Communicating

Communicating with others is one of the more obvious uses for reading and writing and can be described briefly. However, the importance of this use to those I interviewed should not as a result be underestimated. As I mentioned in the previous section, several of my informants identified letter writing in particular as one of the main uses they would have for reading and writing. María emphasized the importance of Spanish for this use. She told me that she needs to learn to write in Spanish because, "if I need to send letters from up here, I won't be sending them in English [to friends and family in Guatemala]." She said, "I have no one to write English letters to."

The way most of those I interviewed get others to read and write letters for them on a regular basis suggests how important communicating in writing is to them. It relates to the importance, not only of

awareness, but also of contact with family and friends, of social networks, and of interrelationships and reciprocation practices contained within the practices associated with letter writing. For non-literates like Doña Ana, Rebeca, and María, this includes the need to find individuals, often close friends, who are willing to help them do the reading and writing that the exchange of letters requires. Angela suggested another way in which a letter writing domain is often a family domain as well when she described her letter writing:

> I write letters to my mother, in Spanish. What I write about is, for example--I have a small granddaughter living with me. Three of them ask me questions. They want me to write for them, to give them tasks, so they ask, "What is your name? What is your mother's name?" That is what they ask. Then they . . . I go ahead and write for them, and they start writing on other pieces of paper, in Spanish. They like to do that.

One other communicative use for reading and writing has to do with writing notes. Rebeca and Lucía both asked the literacy teacher to teach them how to write notes because they wanted to be able to leave instructions for family members telling them, for example, which tasks needed doing around the house, what to eat for lunch or cook for dinner, or what to buy at the store. This would give them the freedom, they said, to not have to be at home to give such instructions. María also mentioned once that she would like to be able to send notes with one of her boys to communicate with the people at the store where she sells home-made tortillas. Several other examples of note writing also emerged from the interviews. Rebeca referred to the notes she gets from her children's schools and, as was described earlier, she has requested that these notes be sent typewritten "in my language." María said that her husband deals with the notes that come from the schools, and that, fortunately, he has not yet had to reply in writing (his English is not yet good enough to reply).

Reading and writing can be observed, then, to be of particular importance to the people I interviewed for communicating, mainly with friends and family. Spanish, once again, is the primary language of use here, but English also has some limited application, for communicating with teachers, for example.

Summary of Uses

The value that reading and writing in Spanish as well as in English have to the people I interviewed is suggested to some extent, then, by the uses they attribute to literacy. These uses reveal, for example,

that the people I interviewed tend to value reading and writing in Spanish for mnemonic purposes, for deciphering English, for communicating with friends and relatives, and for learning English, whereas they value reading and writing in English primarily for learning English and for getting jobs. English literacy they would find useful, but not essential, for travelling around the city and for shopping because even minimal Spanish literacy is sufficient for these purposes. Both languages are valued for the purpose of becoming informed, although Spanish is preferred for this use.

Letter and newspaper reading in Spanish seem to have particular importance to the people in my sample. They go out of their way to get other people to read and write letters for them and read newspapers to them. But reading and writing for learning is also an important use. Only María claimed to choose instrumental uses (such as reading in order to get around and to shop) over learning uses. And in addition to telling me that, although her husband needed to go to school, she can get along without it, she also told me, "I like to know about the news from our countries that comes in the Spanish newspapers, but even more important for me would be to get around better, know where the specials are, shop in the stores." Associations to more generalized areas of life are also suggested by the specific uses people have--to get employment, to be able to have things to say to people, to be able to have access to more trustworthy sources of knowledge. These uses for language provide a reasonably explicit indication of the functions of written language in the minds of those I interviewed. I will now move into a less explicit facet of the functions of written language--negative associations attached to literacy.

Negative Functions

Up to this point, I have approached the issue of functions positively--in terms of the uses the people I interviewed attribute to reading and writing. But the ways in which written language operates in people's lives goes beyond the uses they have for it. Literacy also has negative associations in my informants' lives. A sense of personal inadequacy plus a sense of exclusion or lack of access are two themes which frequently emerged and which suggest additional facets to the way they perceive reading and writing. I will divide this discussion of the negative themes which emerged from the interviews into two categories--expressions of personal inadequacy, particularly in terms of

the strategies discussed earlier, and expressions of exclusion.

Inadequacy

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed strategies that the people I interviewed use to manage many of the literacy needs and wants they experience in their lives. In spite of these strategies which help them to solve many of the literacy problems they face, my informants expressed inadequacy and feelings of limitation with the ways they interacted with written language. The kinds of inadequacy they express point to their understanding and their way of valuing what literacy accomplishes. María, for example, has decided that she can manage without literacy, but when I asked her what she would read and write if she knew how, she exclaimed, "I have the desire, I do. If I could read, my God, how different things would be for me." Desire to read and write is not lacking, but as she says, "the time passes through my hands like water and I have no time to study."

Perhaps the primary strategy my informants use is to ask others to do their reading and writing for them. But it is also a strategy they resent having to resort to. María's statements reveal that she does not like to ask people to help her. She frequently used the verb molestar--to bother--when she talked about getting people to read and write for her. She said she preferred not to bother her husband and children. Doña Ana, as I described earlier, prefers to remain tranquilo rather than always be asking for help.

Rebeca both implicitly and explicitly expressed her dislike of having to ask for help. She very explicitly voiced her frustration in the following statement about the letters her non-literate mother would send to her:

> [In El Salvador] my mother sent me letters from where I grew up to where I was then living. I had to look for someone to read them to me because my son was only in grade one. It was difficult because I had to know someone else. That's why I would like to be able to read, because, imagine, to read a paper, a letter, one says, "Ah," and one is informed immediately. If the friend isn't in, you have to wait. And you can't imagine because you probably don't understand because you haven't lived like that. It is a painful thing, that you want to know.

In another conversation, after saying "I need to learn Spanish [literacy] in order to learn English and in order to write letters to send to my mother and brothers," she stated, "That way I won't have to always be pleading, 'Please write a letter for me.' Always having to ask, it bothers me." In one interview, when we were talking about the use of the

telephone, she emphasized to me that she rarely phones people who help her. Her friends who help her phone her. In one interview, when she was telling me about having to ask the nurse to fill in forms for her, she said, "It was a thing that made me cry. It was something terrible. What helped me a bit is that I tried not to ask very often."

Carlos and Pedro also talked about this same issue. They have been forced to depend on lawyers and counselors, but they avoid asking for help unless there is no other option. Juan, especially, preferred to fill out welfare slips wrongly and get them sent back, and that way learn to fill them out, than to go to a counselor for help except as a last resort. Pedro explained his approach to finding new places in the city:

> Sometimes one has to ask for help. But, as I've been telling you, one has to keep trying until one learns oneself . . . I go to look for something, and if I don't find it, I go and try again. But then if not, when I see it's impossible, only then do I ask.

In Chapter Three, I described Juan's perception that people in Canada are not friendly. When I asked him if he asks for assistance in stores, he told me:

> If I don't understand, sometimes I just don't buy it . . . But I don't go asking. I could without any problem, but here people are very--it's as if they don't want to waste a single word--nothing.

He also told me, in response to a question about whom he went to when he needed help filling out difficult forms and applications, that people in Canada have to be paid before they will talk to you. María and Doña Ana also made comments about perceiving Latin America to be a friendlier context than Canada.

This points to the complexity of the situation. On the one hand, Latin Americans who lack English oral and written competencies can cope with the necessary bureaucratic requirements by depending on a wide variety of scribes in a somewhat similar way that they depended on professional scribes in Latin America. But, on the other hand, such dependence is not so easily developed, nor is it accepted as the common practice in Canadian society, which evidently contributes to what many of my informants perceive as censure and lack of helpfulness. Thus, there is on the one hand a development of a network of scribes, but on the other hand, an attempt to avoid the embarrassment and censure of having to ask for help in an environment which is perceived to be unfriendly.

My informants did not express the same degree of frustration with other strategies they use to solve their literacy related problems. But

several commented on their sense of limitation in reference to the other strategies they use. Rebeca, for example, talked about how her way of experimenting with products is not the best way to buy. She said, "That's how it is when someone doesn't know, one doesn't always buy what is good." Similarly, Pedro told me, "Sometimes one makes mistakes," and things have to be thrown away.

Restricted literacy is also seen as inadequate. As indicated earlier, the women all mentioned being able to shop without too many problems. Rebeca said, "It's not really a problem for me." But in the same statement she also told me:

> I can read the prices. I can't read what's written there because it's in English. It's important, but as I can't read it . . . I know which is beef and I recognize all of that. But notice--it takes more effort for someone who doesn't know than for one who knows because the person who knows can go directly to read the names, but the one who doesn't know must go through more.

María also wishes she could write Spanish in order to keep lists and budgets better because she says "sometimes I don't have good control of the money I spend."

Rebeca also reflected on the limitations of using memory, in spite of her ability to use her memory well. When she described wanting to write in order to benefit from Bible studies, she remarked, "You would write whatever reference there, you would write it, and then you'd remember. But like this, from memory, it doesn't work." I also mentioned earlier that the women cook by memory and seem to have little need to follow recipe books or instructions. But this is not to suggest that they have no desire to use written recipes. Rebeca and María told me that they would like to be able to use recipe books to improve their cooking. Rebeca recounted how limited she felt having to cook for a large number of people, "It was difficult for me when I wanted to make something [new] from a recipe and I couldn't, but I tried anyway. There was a time when I had to prepare meals for ten tractor drivers." María wishes she could read instructions on packages so that she would not have to always be asking her husband for help, or in his absence, having to guess what to do. Thus, reading skills for food preparation, although not essential, are still missed.

These expressions of inadequacy and limitation reveal some of the strong feelings the people I interviewed have about written language. They perceive the strategies they use to deal with written language negatively--a social nuisance which leads to embarrassing dependency and

requires waiting rather than direct access to information. They see their strategies as inefficient, keeping them from more control of the details of their lives, and requiring effort or personal cost that literates do not experience. The perceptions of exclusion that I will discuss next add more to these negative meanings associated with written language.

Exclusion

The various contexts or locations I described in Chapter 3 differ from each other in terms of the degree of access a non-literate has to them. The difference can be seen to be either a matter of making access difficult but not impossible, as in the case of shopping or using the TTC, or a matter of total exclusion. Most of my informants, for example, have found that ESL classes above the basic beginner's level are inaccessible. Access to better paying jobs is another example of perceived inaccessibility because of one's lack of schooling and knowledge of English. Consequently, the workplace and the ESL classroom are seen to be two particularly difficult contexts for non-literates to enter. These two contexts, where exclusion is perceived strongly, form a more tangible side to deeply rooted perceptions and notions which emerged from the interviews about a non-literate's inferior status and lack of culture.

As mentioned earlier, employment that provides an adequate income is directly linked to the two closely related prerequisites of schooling and English. It is clear from María's comments that this link between schooling and employment also exists in Guatemala:

> In our countries, we have that problem that we say, they say, or our parents would say, "It's not necessary to study. What are you going to study for?" It's that they didn't study. They didn't face the problems we do . . . Now there's more interest because there are more who have become aware that in the factories, if one doesn't have sixth grade, or the first level of secondary, they don't give you work. If one doesn't study, one doesn't get work. That's why now all of us parents want our children to study.

María said that her husband has had a lot of education, through grade six, and therefore has a better chance than herself of getting an adequately paying job in Canada.

But education itself is not sufficient for good employment. English is also necessary in two ways--first, in order to get into what most of my informants call "training" (training courses required for getting the qualifications for better jobs), and second, to actually perform the

jobs. Rebeca told me that good restaurants here expect her to take training courses regardless of the five years of experience she had in the food catering industry in the U.S. But to get such training, one needs English. She said,

> It's a complicated thing for me. The jobs which don't require English pay less and require harder work. And to work in the cafeteria, the woman told me that I have to study English. Because I have experience in the cafeteria and the kitchen, but here you need English, and it pays $7 an hour. But in the factory they only pay $4, and there they don't require English, but $4 isn't enough, not even $5, because I have four children to raise.

But it is only people with education who are perceived to have the specific literacy skills which give them access to English. Thus, María feels her husband is the one who has the chance to learn the kind of English needed to get into "training" because he is the one with education.

Pedro told me that he and his brother have not yet been allowed into training courses. I asked if it was because he did not know English well enough, and he said, "One [reason they don't permit us] is that we don't know English, and another is that we have no education even in our own language."

Different individuals try to work around the exclusion they feel in different ways. Manuel, Juan, and Pedro all pin their hopes on getting landed immigrant status in order to have access to the kind of government English courses which are reputed to teach English more effectively than the courses they now have available to them. María, however, feels that she is too busy raising a family to study and that she manages well enough as it is. But at the same time, she looks to her husband, and to her children, to get the education and the English needed to make a life for themselves.

Rebeca also looks to her children to get the education she never had. She said, "I would never do that to my children" referring to the way her father ensured that she and her siblings always went well dressed and well housed, but never sent them to school. She said, "What does being well dressed serve if one doesn't have education?" And she differs from María in that she does not only pin her hopes on her children but also intends herself to learn the literacy and the English required to get work that pays well.

Exclusion was identified in a number of other contexts as well. Doña Ana can never read the books and magazines that surround her in her son's

apartment although she would like to be able to, but because her son is too busy to always be reading to her, she does not bother with it and occupies herself with other things. She told me once that if she had known how to read, she would have been much too busy because then she would have been doing even more than what she does now. The fact that Doña Ana merely ignores what her non-literacy does not give her access to suggests that exclusion is not as meaningful or of such consequence in all contexts for everyone. Doña Ana, like the others, has learned to operate in spite of her non-literacy, but unlike Rebeca in particular, she has become resigned to many of the limitations it has placed on her. Rebeca, however, intends to become literate and learn English in order to seek employment that provides enough income to raise a family and, in so doing, refuses to be resigned to the limitations.

Participating in the schooling of one's children is another example of how exclusion has different meanings in different contexts for different people. Doña Ana remarked that she could not help her children with their school work, but because they were such obedient children, she never needed to preoccupy herself with what they were learning. Her exclusion from their school work did not bother her because her eldest son helped the younger ones and because she was too busy supporting them financially while they were in school. Rebeca and María, however, expressed frustration and regret about being excluded from helping their children with their homework. Part of this exclusion has to do with their children's embarrassment at their mother's lack of education. Doña Ana also does not feel the pressure that Rebeca and María do to learn literacy and English skills in order to seek good employment because she no longer has the need to support a family. As mentioned earlier, when Doña Ana was much younger and still raising a family, she left her husband to move to the city in order to provide an education for her children. But exclusion from English classes does not now have the personal urgency for her that it does for the younger women who are still raising their children. Doña Ana pointed this out once when she remarked that Rebeca and María were the ones who really needed to learn to read and write because they still had families to raise.

My informants' perceptions of exclusion extend beyond specific domains and activities to less tangible but more all encompassing perceptions of inferiority. The sense of exclusion which emerged from the interviews often included an implicit link between literacy and status or culture.

Rebeca clearly voices the way she sees the difference between herself and those "who know" in relation to her experience of learning English and its connection with schooling. To illustrate that she is not on the same footing with schooled people, she gave the example of a woman she knows whose school-age son has not been able to fit into the Canadian school system:

> But, there in El Salvador, this woman had not sent her boy to school; so the boy felt frustrated in that he didn't understand whether he was coming or going. Other children his age understood everything because they came with schooling, but that boy didn't. So then the case of an adult is the same. Some who come having been schooled, and others who don't come with school, as in my case. So it's very difficult.
>
> But the teachers treat everyone alike--the ones who know with the ones who don't know. And that's what one feels badly about because it's not like that. So one says, "How can this teacher think that I'm going to understand if she is a person who has studied for many years but I have never studied?" But they would tell me that I was better off. One teacher told me that a person who has never studied should be able to learn English better, that it would be easier, that it was better for me. But I told her, "How is it going to be better for me if I have never studied?" I couldn't understand like everyone else because I didn't know many of the letters. I'm not the same as a person who has studied before.

She feels similar barriers in other contexts. Her descriptions of certain church gatherings also contained a sense of the distinctions which are in effect between those who know and those who do not. The distinctions she made included both class barriers she experienced and actual technical barriers that result from inability to read and write. She observed,

> I would go to the church and would hear that all people are equal. But I would say to myself, 'No, we're not all equal because I'm not equal to those who know.' . . . The one who knows needs only to take a form and fill it in in a minute, right? but one who doesn't know must be there asking, "Could you please fill this in for me?"

A similar sense of outrage was also suggested by Doña Ana in a number of statements she made which also begin to suggest meanings attached to written language which extend to distinctions made, not only between schooled and non-schooled, but also between urban and rural, civilized and non-civilized, Spanish and Indian. One context in which this sense of backwardness emerged was in discussions about the ability to sign one's name. Doña Ana, Pedro, and Juan, all of whom grew up in remote rural areas, described the practice of finger printing required in the place of signatures on documents for those who could not sign their

names. And Doña Ana, in a rare expression of strong displeasure, said she always insisted that someone else sign for her

> in order not to have to put down my fingers--I couldn't stand having to put down my fingers on the paper--so others would sign for me. And that's how I managed to get along well. It looked very bad to have to put your fingers down there.

There are other examples of concern with appearance, culture, and bearing. Most of those I interviewed were conscious and embarrassed about the Spanish they speak because they perceive it to be sub-standard. Pedro told me he discovered that, when they arrived in the city from the El Salvadorean countryside in order to escape the civil war, the people in the cities used different words and expressions (modismos) than what he used. The embarrassment of not speaking correct Spanish was particularly accute for those who have children because of the way their children make fun of them and do not respect them. Rebeca told me of her anger (me da rabia) and frustration when her children bait her about talking like an Indian and about coming from the mountains. María began to cry in one literacy class when she started to talk about the way her kids compared her to an Indian because of her lack of schooling and substandard Spanish.

Many of Doña Ana's statements reveal a concern she, in particular, has for not drawing attention to herself. She suggested that she managed to get along well in the cities partly because:

> I would be careful--and I would copy from the people who knew how to conduct themselves better than I did, and not copy from those who knew nothing. From those who know, because you can't learn from those who don't know. Everything you now observe me doing in the way I conduct myself comes from the way I have copied from the people who know. And after I had that daughter of mine who has kept correcting me . . . She says, "Mother, that's not how you say it," and I say, "You're right, daughter." . . . And she would correct me. So I watch the people who are educated, and I do the same.

Angela also took care to make me understand that she made it a practice to associate with professional and well established people rather than with people on the streets in order to improve herself. In a similar vein, Rebeca several times commented on the importance of beautiful handwriting. She told me that, in Latin America, if a person's handwriting is beautiful, you can be certain that that person is not lying if she/he claims to be educated. She also talked about how it bothered her (especially in reference to church gatherings) when people who claimed to be educated did not show their education in the ways they sometimes treated her. Such statements reveal strong associations the

people in my sample make between literacy, schooling, and being civilized and cultured.

In summary, then, exclusion is described most explicitly in terms of the two domains of ESL classrooms and training programs. Reading and writing skills get directly linked to employment in a progression which begins with literacy skills as the bottom rung of a ladder which begins with Spanish literacy, proceeds to Spanish schooling, goes to English learning, and then gets to training courses, all seen as prerequisite to good employment. Thus, exclusion from English learning because of Spanish illiteracy is the key to ultimate exclusion from training and better employment. But reading and writing also comes to be associated with understandings of culture and status. Higher status employment is directly linked to literacy, education, and English. And the associations are all linked together in Doña Ana's sense of needing to learn to speak and act in a more socially acceptable manner. María's and Rebeca's lack of reading and writing skills leads, not only to a sense of inequality in relation to other people who do have the skills, but also to a sense of resentment and frustration that stem from the associations their children make between non-literacy and lack of civilization. Thus, the Hispanos in my sample tend to link lack of culture and status to non-literacy both in the larger world of schooling and employment, and in their own lives, both at church, for example, and at home.

CONCLUSION

What can be observed, then, from the comments made by the people I interviewed is that written language, and the practices used in relation to written language, have associations and meanings attached to them. The strategies that the people use and the uses they attribute to written language suggest how literacy operates in their lives both in terms of what they can accomplish as well as in terms of what they want to accomplish. This is the positive side of how literacy functions in their lives. And Spanish literacy is an important part of the uses they have for written language, particularly for communicating over space and time with family and friends, and for learning the English they need for better employment. English literacy is associated almost narrowly, yet with a high priority, on good employment.

But there is also a sense of inadequacy and exclusion which suggests another side to how written language functions in the lives of the people

I interviewed. Their sense of being limited, inefficient, a burden to others, and their sense of inferior status, lack of culture, and the embarrassment they cause their children all reveal the meanings that they attach to written language specifically and education generally.

Thus, there are two sides to literacy functions. A number of Spanish words which were used in the interviews help to illustrate in yet another way the two somewhat contradictory sides to literacy functions which I have elaborated in this chapter. I began the chapter talking about the two meanings for the word managing. Three Spanish verbs in particular were often used in the interviews in discussions about getting along or managing--desenvolverse, defenderse, and costarse.

The word desenvolverse is a word I used in a number of my interview questions. In the context I used it, it suggests developing proficiency in getting along well in one's city or in one's work. My informants, however, rarely used this word in their responses to my questions even though their responses indicated that they understood the way I was using the word. The Central Americans in particular would instead respond with the word defenderse. Doña Ana was one of the few people who used the word desenvolverme unsolicited to tell me that, in whatever city she lived, she was able to learn to get around the city without problem. The connotation was that she had control of the situation.

The word defenderse has two sides to it, especially as it was used by María, Juan, and Pedro. On the one hand, María used the word to suggest her pride in the way she responsibly fended for her family through her meatcutting work in Guatemala, and the way she manages to solve the problems of taking care of household business, dispensing medicine properly, and shopping here in Toronto. But, on the other hand, the word has connotations of struggle, of staying afloat, and of fighting to manage difficulties where defeat is a real possibility. María used the word in this way when she told me that her husband needs to learn English to get good employment, otherwise neither he nor she would be able to defend the children, and then who would defend them? Juan suggested a similar double connotation when he said that he and Pedro both have much more English to learn, but that they can now defend themselves in English. This use of the word suggests that they now have the ability to fend for themselves, a situation which gives them some pride because then they are not dependent, but at the same time, it also suggests that they do not yet have the situation under control, and that they must

still struggle. The picture is one of struggling to survive with some dignity.

The issue of dignity also emerges in the word costarse. Most of the people I talked to used this word to express the difficulties they have experienced in trying to manage or defend themselves. Costarse can suggest simply that something is difficult, as when Rebeca says that having to memorize hymns me cuesta. But when she said that it cost her a great deal to always have to wait for a friend to read important letters that came from her family, she suggested that personal cost was involved. In the same conversation, she talked of crying with frustration because of having to ask for, and wait for, help.

These words will enter the discussion again in the next chapter in a discussion of how my findings relate to what other researchers and theorists have written about literacy. These words illustrate, however, that the people I talked to manage in many situations with few literacy skills, often without any problem, but that, at the same time, they also perceive their lack of literacy skills in Toronto as contributing to a difficult situation for which they have had to pay a personal price.

CHAPTER 5--FINDINGS IN RELATION TO THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to compare my findings, as they are reported in the previous two chapters, to what other authors and researchers have found and argued on similar issues. In my survey of the literature, I found no other studies which focus specifically on the same phenomena I investigated--the uses city-based semi- and non-literate minority-language adults have for written language. But a number of works follow similar approaches and others report findings which are relevant to specific aspects of this investigation.

This study has similarities to Oscar Lewis' works, in particular his well known book Children of Sanchez (1961). This is both because the people who told me about their lives come from a Latin American lower-class mestizo tradition similar to the tradition to which Lewis' informants belonged, and because the methodology I used comes from the same ethnographic approach used by Lewis. Lewis, however, does not focus specifically on the issues of language and literacy and therefore does not contribute significantly to the central question of this investigation.

Rockhill's work with "Latinos" in the Los Angeles area parallels my study more closely than most other studies. She also describes the everyday lives of low-education Spanish-speaking adults who live in an English-speaking urban location. Her study adds in an important way to mine because the much larger sample in the study she describes adds depth and strength to my more limited findings. But it is important to point out some of the differences as well. An important difference is that Rockhill did not set out specifically to investigate uses of language and literacy. Her objective was more general--to ask people to tell their life histories and pursue important themes which emerged from those life histories. But because the study was focused on minority-language adults who have had little or no education, the confused and complex overlap of schooling, literacy, and second language proficiency nevertheless emerges as part of the description these people make of their everyday lives in Los Angeles. One theme that emerged frequently from the interviews she and her colleagues conducted was the priority the Latinos gave to language learning. Rockhill writes:

> It is difficult to get people to talk about literacy. Most talk about language and the problems of learning English. They conceptualize their situations as one of not knowing English, not of being illiterate. (1986, p. 14)

Thus, although Rockhill did not set out to describe in detail the ways

in which low-education Latinos use language in Los Angeles, language use emerges as an important theme in their life histories because English is encountered as a major obstacle in their lives. And although the people themselves spoke of their learning needs in terms of learning English rather than of schooling and literacy, schooling and literacy issues emerge as a subtext in her study.

I will also refer to a number of studies which are different from mine in that they do not describe literacy in an urban context, but they provide important comparative data on how literacy practices are structured in other multilingual societies. These include Scribner and Cole's (1981) study of the Vai in Liberia, Burnaby and MacKenzie's (1985) study of the Cree in a northern Canadian native community, Street's (1984) study of a small agricultural town in rural Iran, and Wagner, Messick, and Spratt's (1986) study of literacy in Morroco.

I will also be referring to a number of studies which describe literacy in modern, urban, industrialized societies. These studies, however, rarely raise multilingual and multicultural issues. One such study is Levine's (1986) large scale investigation of literacy in the lives of working class adult literacy students in an industrial city in England. Because he focuses on literacy in the work place, his findings help to add substance to the gap in my study on literacy in the context of employment. Another work to which I will be referring is Kozol's book Illiterate America (1985). Although he does not describe a specific study of a given community or context, he provides a range of everyday examples of the ways in which non-literates deal with not being literate in North American urban settings. Like Levine, Kozol focuses on a monolingual English-speaking population, but he does this consciously, he says, to emphasize that immigrants form only a very small part of the number of illiterates in America (p. 218).

Graff (1979), a historian of literacy, adds yet another perspective to this discussion because he provides an historical analysis of the way in which literacy operated in the everyday lives of the inhabitants of the cities of Ontario a century ago. Although he also does not deal with a multilingual situation, the way in which literacy operated in the lives of minority groups forms an important part of his argument. His description of a "literacy myth" provides insights into some of the ideological roots of literacy's power in present social structures in Ontario.

Finally, an important study in any discussion of language use is Heath's (1983) ethnographic study of the ways in which reading, writing, and speaking come to be learned, used, and valued differently by children from different yet neighbouring English-speaking communities. Although she describes neither a multilingual nor a large urban setting, her work is particularly appropriate in this discussion because it provides additional examples of the ways reading and writing operate in a North American industrial setting and demonstrates that the uses for reading, writing, and speaking can be structured differently even in neighbouring English-speaking communities.

I will also refer in what follows to other studies and to other theoretical and policy-oriented works which touch on more specific aspects of my findings. The bulk of the discussion, however, will be the dialogue produced between the works to which I have briefly referred above and my own findings as reported in chapters 3 and 4. I will once again follow the same general format which I used in chapters 3 and 4. Thus, the discussion will follow, in order, the following topics: 1)the domains in which non-literates encounter written language, 2) practices non-literates use to deal with written language, 3) and uses and associations non-literates attach to literacy skills and written language.

DOMAINS OF LITERACY

The focus in this study on the domains in which semi- and non-literate people encounter written language stems from the belief that describing how written language operates in everyday situations is important to an understanding of the way in which literacy is structured in a given society. As I explained in chapter 2, I borrowed this term "domain" from Wagner, Messick, and Spratt (1986) to categorize the different locations and situations individuals regularly encounter in their day to day activities.

The domains which have traditionally received a great deal of attention in literacy studies have been the more public contexts in modernizing societies, such as bureaucratic settings, schools, and the workplace. The discussions have centered on the debates about intellectual, economic, and political effects of literacy in societies. More interest is now being shown in literacy practices in the home, in the streets and shops, and in leisure and religious activities as more context-specific studies have begun to supplement the large scale

investigations which deal with societies as a whole. In the discussion which follows, I will begin with what the literature has to say about these more neglected private domains before moving to the more extensive literature on literacy in the public domains of bureaucracies, schools, and the workplace.

The Home

The home, as I mentioned in the two previous chapters, is a domain in which non-literate and semi-literate Hispanos encounter and interact with a wide range of written materials. Kozol (1985), in his description of urban American homes of non-literates, describes a similar range, from product labels to medication instructions, and from bureaucratic mail to books from the children's schools. What is distinctive about Kozol's work is the special emphasis he places on the problems and dangers non-literates face because of not being able to read such things as bills and expiry notices, apartment leases, and warnings on chemicals. He rarely, however, addresses how non-literates deal with these problems and dangers.

Rockhill (1986) also makes a number of observations about literacy practices in the homes of the "Latinos" in her study. She describes only English literacy practices, however, not Spanish literacy practices. She observes, for example, that "the women tend to learn and to depend more upon the written word, whereas the men acquire and use more spoken English" (p. 15). She attributes this partly to the fact that women are not often given the opportunity to leave the home, and when they do go to work, they rarely get work where they have contact with English-speaking people. She also found, as I found, that among low-education Hispanos it is the women who are often responsible for the paperwork. Rockhill writes,

> We were surprised to find that most transactions requiring the use of forms is handled by the women . . . . In a detailed inventory of English-language situations in everyday life, women report handling almost all of those which involved the use of the written word. (1986, p. 21)

Heath (1983) makes some observations about the uses of reading and writing in the homes of three separate English-speaking communities she studied. Although she does not focus as I do only on non-literate's experience of written language, the different ways in which reading and writing are structured into the three different communities demonstrates how even neighboring communities can have vastly different ways of using

reading and writing. The Trackton and Roadville people, for example, rarely wrote letters (p. 231), whereas the Mainstream people frequently did (p. 257). Trackton people rarely kept written materials in their homes once they had been read (p. 232), but Roadville people tended to collect written materials in their home, yet they would rarely read them (pp. 219, 221).

A number of insights can be drawn from the literature above in terms of literacy in the home. Rockhill's finding that women in low-education Hispano homes tend to be responsible for bureaucratic paperwork suggests the importance of culture-specific roles on who uses literacy for what purposes. Heath's study demonstrates that the home is an important location for socialization into the uses for written and spoken language, and that the homes of non-mainstream groups can be the setting for uses of language which vary significantly from mainstream uses. The way the people I interviewed use newspapers illustrates Heath's point. The Hispanos in my sample use newspapers in ways which are not characteristic of homes where English is the primary language of everyday life. Spanish newspapers, for example, are primarily used for the news and English newspapers are primarily used for the advertising sections and as a means of practicing English. In addition, the way in which low-education Hispanos talk about newspapers, including translating practices--English writing being translated into oral Spanish--also reflect ways of using written and oral language which are not characteristic mainstream English households. The implication is that minority-language groups use reading and writing in ways which do not necessarily parallel the reading and writing practices which occur in mainstream homes.

Getting Around

I concluded from the interviews I conducted that the public transportation system in Toronto is such that it can be used effectively even with a minimal ability to use written aids. I found that the people I interviewed managed effectively to get around by public transit after initial frustration becoming oriented to their new surroundings. Even the subway can be managed by most of the people I interviewed, although some continue to find it intimidating.

Both Kozol and Rockhill, however, describe much more impossible situations faced by non-literates and by non-English speaking people in other North American cities. Kozol (1985) writes

> While ingenuity can sometimes help a man or woman to discern

> directions from familiar landmarks, buildings, cemeteries, churches, and the like, most illiterates are virtually immobilized. They seldom wander past the streets and neighborhoods which they know. Geographical paralysis becomes a bitter metaphor for their entire existence. (p. 26)

Rockhill similarly describes the problems Latino women face getting around in Los Angeles because of unsafe neighborhoods and a poor public transportation system. She writes, "The fear of being unable to defend themselves on the street, either getting lost or being accosted sees women retreat to their homes" (1982, p. 9).

Rockhill (1986), however, focuses on the way in which women's roles are structured. She noticed that, for Latino women, the opportunity to learn their way around the city in Los Angeles is linked to their marital status. She found that women who do not live in a married relationship "go out more and overcome some of their fear as they learn how to get around the city" (p. 16). This point has an important bearing on my study because three of the four women I interviewed in some detail were single due to separation from, or death of, the husband. Thus, it would seem that my sample is skewed with a high number of non-married women who have had to learn on their own how to get around in Toronto. This would make my study unrepresentative of Spanish-speaking non-literate women who are living in married relationships. Rebeca once commented to me that she is glad not to be like women she has observed who must depend on their husbands to drive them around the city. This would seem to corroborate Rockhill's point. Many such women may be hidden and isolated even in the comparatively safe and accessible city of Toronto.

Another important implication is that, to focus only on obstacles related to literacy is to miss other features of a social setting which determine the kinds of practices which occur in those settings. Rockhill's finding that isolation and retreat are linked in an important way to marital status also suggests that being able to get around is not just a function of being able to decode signs. She points out that the issue of how immigrants participate in literacy and ESL programs must be taken beyond such issues as availability of courses and student motivation to learn. Also involved are structural obstacles, such as gendered family roles which do not allow the mother to pursue her desire for education.

Fingeret (1983), in her study of non-literate adults in a North American urban setting, also goes beyond simple generalizations about

links between non-literacy and "geographical paralysis." She uses a continuum to distinguish between what she calls cosmopolitan non-literates and local non-literates. The cosmopolitan non-literate, among other things, tends to be more geographically mobile than the local non-literate. Fingeret is careful to point out that many non-literates are too mobile to allow for a simple link to be made between illiteracy and isolation. What distinguishes the cosmopolitan from the local non-literate, in the extreme cases, has more to do with the local non-literate's "inability to engage the social world" as successfully as the cosmopolitan non-literate (p. 141). This parallels what María told me--that chispa, or spark, rather than English or literacy, help her to manage the household business.

Fingeret also emphasizes the importance of taking into account the social and cultural contexts in which non-literates live because she found that traits of dependence and independence seem to be linked to class and ethnic factors at the group and society level. This point suggests that social and cultural mechanisms are as much at work as individual psychological or dispositional factors (p. 139).

Riggs (1985) illustrates a similar point in her article about a woman named Petra, the mother in a Mexican agricultural migrant family. Riggs describes how Petra learned an elementary level of Spanish reading and writing with a tutor's assistance, but writing in the end came to have little more meaning for Petra than good penmanship and the ability to write her name on all of her possessions in the trailer where she lived. The kind of literacy she learned reflected the social and cultural role she occupied both in her own mind and in her family's perception of her place in their day to day lives. The rudiments of literacy on their own did nothing to change her isolation nor to provide a new sense of potency and possibility.

In sum, then, my findings suggest that Kozol overstates the case when he relates non-literacy to geographical immobility. Other authors corroborate my findings. Rockhill shows that, in the case of many of the women in her study, the isolation is tied in important ways to dangerous neighbourhoods and gender-related restrictions that do not permit a married woman the freedom to go out on her own. This suggests that local physical realities (dangerous neighbourhoods) and cultural, gender related practices, rather than non-literacy on its own, contribute in important ways to geographical paralysis. Fingeret also makes the point

that non-literacy on its own does not cause lack of mobility because many non-literates learn to engage their particular social world in such a way that they manage to get around. This adds an individual, perhaps a personality, factor to physical and cultural realities of a specific situation.

María in my sample illustrates how a different configuration of physical, social, and personality factors permits her, as a non-literate, to get around. María lives in a married situation which is similar in many ways to the male dominated, restricted situation experienced by the married Hispano women in Rockhill's study. But María lives in a city where the public transit system provides a safe and effective means of mobility and where neighbourhoods are safe in comparison to Los Angeles Latino barrios. María also demonstrates a personal ability (what she identifies as chispa) to interact with the social world she encounters.

This configuration of factors can be extended to Hispanos' difficulties with English. The problems they face do not stem simply from the need to speak English, but also from other social, cultural, physical, and personal factors which combine to provide means of surmounting obstacles. A good example from my study of someone who has surmounted many obstacles regardless of lack of English and literacy skills is Doña Ana. She has developed strategies for getting around large cities in spite of her limited literacy skills and an almost total lack of oral English proficiency. Isolation, therefore, must be related to more than simply a lack of written language skills or second language skills. Fingeret raises the issue of personal characteristics and observes that independence is related to a non-literates' ability to recognize his/her actual potency in the face of the literate society's judgment that non-literacy causes an inability to function (p. 142). Rockhill's work demonstrates that geographical mobility also relates to social and cultural factors as well as to local physical realities which inhibit the opportunity to get around. Second language and literacy skills on their own do not change gender-related isolation, remove danger from a neighbourhood, or improve a public transportation system.

Public Places

Another dimension of dealing with written language while getting around the city has to do with the print that is encountered in public places (in addition to public transit system signs). Those I interviewed talked little about public print, but several mentioned that, in stores,

they identified sales by the colours and location of signs. But, on the whole, they seem to ignore the public print they encounter even though this kind of written language is omnipresent in North American urban settings--on the street and in the stores. There is some discussion in the literature about how semi- and non-literate people come to operate in public settings, and how they use public print in their everyday lives. Szwed (1981) suggests, for example, that "the ability to read a sign (by definition a public event) involves at least a <u>different</u> set of skills than private reading" because signs are "located in certain locales and have specific designs and shapes" (p. 18).

Heath (1983) makes several important observations about public print. She describes how Trackton toddlers learn to recognize logos and name brands on packaged food. She observed that the children recognized the name brands and names of cereals as they appeared on the boxes or in advertisements only as long as the words appeared in their well known shapes, colours, and scripts. The children continued to easily recognize name brands that were cut from the packages and placed in a different format, but not when the same words appeared in other shapes or kinds of lettering (pp. 192-93). It is possible that in a similar manner adult non-literates also recognize many logos and lettering on familiar packages but cannot transfer these skills to different kinds of lettering or extended text. This suggests that the ability to recognize public print does not necessarily transfer to other kinds of reading, which would support Szwed's hypothesis that public print does not require the same skills that private reading does.

Heath (1980) also noted that individuals from the non-mainstream communities tend to read only the parts of instructions on packages or price tags which served their purposes. She writes,

> . . . community members would scan the [price] tag for the critical cue--the decimal point--and then read the price of the item. Similarly, only specific parts of soup cans, detergent boxes, brochures on automobiles, etc. . . . . They searched each item for only those messages they judged meaningful. (p. 129)

This parallels my observation that my informants seem to ignore much of the print they encounter in stores and other public places.

Kozol (1985) also briefly notes that non-literate adults depend on well advertised brands with recognizable logos and labels. He also argues that non-literates "are denied the benefits of the least costly products" because they cannot comparatively shop (particularly for

no-name products, p. 24). This does not hold true, however, for the people in my study. The people I interviewed have many ways of economizing. As several of those I interviewed pointed out, they are limited by their inabilities to read the signs, but this does not stop them from economizing effectively because they have other ways of accomplishing the same tasks.

Choice that exists in public contexts brings up Heath's (1983) and Street's (1986) discussion of the orality/literacy mix plus an extension of this notion of mix to the first language/second language mix. Many societies emphasize the oral component in purchasing or exchange transactions. In multilingual contexts, such transactions often require oral use of a second language. Weinstein (1984) notes that many Hmong non-literate adults successfully learned to use a second language--Lao--to interact in the public markets in Southeast Asia (p. 476). In North America, however, they have not been able to learn English in the same way because the shopping context is not structured around talking and bartering. On those occasions when talk becomes necessary in North American shops, the Hmong have adopted the practice of taking with them one of the young men who has learned English to become the group spokesperson (p. 480). This practice effectively achieves their communicative objectives in a way which does not assume each person must be proficient in English.

Another example of how purchasing and exchange practices structure oral language use differently in different places was provided by the two El Salvadoran brothers I interviewed. They told me a person is required to talk in order to shop in El Salvador, not only because of the bartering and hawking practices used there, but also because items were kept behind counters in El Salvadoran stores. One must ask for things. Here it is different, they told me, because one merely takes items from the shelves and then pays without a word.

In sum, then, the experience that semi- and non-literate adults have of public print is an issue which has received only some attention in the literature on literacy. Heath and Szwed suggest that reading public print includes a specific set of skills such as shape, colour, and location cues. Weinstein point out that, in the case of low-education minority-language adults, the oral component of public settings is crucial to take into account. Fingeret's emphasis on the importance of the ability to engage one's social world would also support this oral

component, a component which in Toronto seems to inhibit the learning of oral English. Choice is such, however, that a non-literate and a non-English speaker can often employ alternative ways to manage in many public settings.

Religious Activities

Many of the people I interviewed talked frequently about the religious applications of reading and writing, such as public and private Bible reading, the use of hymnbooks and prayer books, and jotting down scripture references for later consultation. I also noted that, for the people in my sample, the religious context is strictly a Spanish language domain.

Literacy as it is encountered and used in the religious lives of people is mentioned by a number of other authors. Kozol (1985), for example, quotes the reason why one person he interviewed wanted to learn to read and write:

> I've been shaking in my boots for twenty years that [the deacon] would call on me [to read]. Some day soon, when I'm called, I am going to stand up. I am going to hold that Bible in my hands--and I am going to read (p. 130, emphasis in the original).

From a historical perspective, Graff (1986) summarizes Johanson's (1981) study of the history of literacy in Sweden. Sweden achieved near universal literacy in the seventeenth century in home-based efforts to extend reading (not writing) skills to the entire population largely as the result of the Lutheran reformation which swept the country (1986, p. 129). Among the various objectives for the campaign, according to Graff, the goals of piety and civility were the "decisive ones". He adds, "The only other areas in the West that so fully and quickly achieved near-universal levels of literacy before the end of the eighteenth century were places of intensely pious religion" and that "urbanization, commercialization, and industrialization had virtually nothing to do with the process" (p. 129).

Heath (1983) emphasizes the importance of the religious uses of literacy at a more local, community level. She demonstrates that the language-use patterns of everyday life in the three communities she investigated reflect close similarities to the different ways in which written and spoken language are used in the churches and religious practices/beliefs of each of the three separate communities. It is for this reason that Heath maintains that uses for language, both written and spoken, closely parallel other cultural patterns and understandings in

a given community.

In multilingual situations, the languages used in religious expression, and the related roles those languages take on as a result, can contribute in important ways to the structure of language-use choices in different societies. Scribner and Cole (1981) describe the religious literacy practices of the Vai in Liberia. The Qu'ranic Arabic the people use is a language most of the learners do not understand. Scribner and Cole found that most Vai boys who learn Qu'ranic literacy are "unlikely to learn Arabic sufficiently to read or write with comprehension" and yet "they learn to decipher Arabic characters well enough so that they can begin at any point in the text" (pp. 30-31). Scribner and Cole are careful to point out that Qu'ranic literacy is not equivalent to Vai script literacy. Not only are different scripts and different languages used, but Qu'ranic literacy is learned differently (boys in groups learning by rote memorization) from the way in which Vai script is learned (one on one as adults). The two scripts have different functions and operate for different purposes (pp. 86-87).

Street also discusses Qu'ranic literacy as it is learned by most boys in a small rural Iranian town. Like Heath, he argues that the religious uses of literacy are central to the ideology which structures the lives of the people in all other domains of life.

Burnaby and MacKenzie (1985) found that one of the primary ways in which the Cree in Rupert House use reading and writing is in the religious domain. They contrast this to the lack of emphasis majority Canadian culture places on literacy in religious observances (p. 77). And although religious literacy activities in Rupert House occur both in English and in Cree, it is in the religious domain, according to Burnaby and MacKenzie, "that the use of literature in the Native language has its strongest function in the settlement" (p. 57). This suggests not only the importance of literacy in the religious domain, but also the significance of literacy in a particular language.

The literature tends to support my findings, then, that the uses of literacy in the religious domain can be particularly important to many people. It is clear that religious literacy is often tied to specific languages either because the language is considered sacred (as with the Qu'ranic scriptures) or because people prefer to perform religious activities in their mother tongue. This illustrates how different languages often take on different functions in different domains, and it

reinforces the argument that literacy should be conceptualized in the plural--as different literacies operating in different domains. Yet authors such as Heath and Street also argue that the religious domain (or as Street would argue, the ideological domain) can have a strong bearing on the ways in which written and spoken language operate in the other domains of life.

Entertainment

I paid little attention to the literacy which could be classified as pertaining to the domain of entertainment. I paid little attention to this kind of literacy because I found few examples of the use of literacy specifically for the purpose of leisure in my study. But several authors deal in passing with this application of reading and writing.

Wagner, Messick, and Spratt (1986), for example, use entertainment as one of the categories in their classification system of literacy-use. Unfortunately, they provide scant evidence of this domain in their study. Burnaby and MacKenzie (1985) note that the use of Cree literacy for personal expression or entertainment in Rupert House is rare. Only English and French literates read for enjoyment (p. 69). Kozol (1985) discusses reading for leisure as part of his argument that book publishers and libraries should promote literacy and literacy programs because, to stay in business, they depend on readers. He argues that, because planners of literacy campaigns and programs tend to frame literacy in terms of functional or mechanistic needs (to read instructions, manuals, signs, forms, warnings, etc.), they tend to overlook the importance that literacy for leisure and enjoyment has in many people's lives (p. 51).

Graff (1979) discusses the use of popular literature in mid-nineteenth-century Ontario. cheap, easy to read, popular fiction that was aimed purely at diversion became available to the lower and middle classes. Such uses of reading, according to Graff, contributed to a tension between the uses for reading that promoters of literacy had in mind for the building of morality and character in the undisciplined masses and the way most people actually used literacy skills. Graff points out, however, that in effect literacy which is used for little more than diversion and (as we shall see later in this chapter) limited job related applications contributes to the maintenance of existing relations of power because the political and heuristic potential of literacy for personal, group, and class development remains dormant in

such an environment (294-96). This means of maintaining existing relations, according to Graff is a demonstration of Gramsci's (1971) notion of ideological hegemony whereby lower classes in effect participate in, and consent to, structures which limit and control their lives.

The critical tradition in the field of communications and media studies focuses much of its attention on this issue of ideological hegemony (see, for example, S. Hall, 1982). I pursue this issue to some extent later in this chapter, but because it is not the focus of this study, I do not deal with it at length. During the interviews, I did observe that my informants tended to express a preference for tabloids (in Spanish and English) over other kinds of newspapers. This preference, as well as the place of other media (such as television) in their lives, however, is not the objective of this study.

In sum, then, as with the other overlapping domains of home life, religious activities, and moving around the city, the place of literacy in the domain of entertainment has received some attention in the literature. The kind of attention that authors such as Graff give to this domain focuses on the issue of ideological hegemony, a point which will come up again in the section on the functions of literacy later in this chapter.

Bureaucracies

The role of written language in bureaucracies has been an important theme in the literature on literacy. Governments that are intent on nation building and political consolidation treat literacy as an important component of modernization because of its role in the effective operation of bureaucracies. The anthropologist Jack Goody (1977) refers to Max Weber's theories on bureaucracies to summarize his own view that the written word is central to the effective operation of complex bureaucratic systems:

> [I]t is clear that the adoption of written modes of communication was intrinsic to the development of more wide-ranging, more depersonalized and more abstract systems of government; at the same time, the shift from oral intercourse meant assigning less importance to face-to-face situations. (p. 15)

Part of Goody's argument is that the technology of making lists and keeping records played a central role in the evolution of more complex social, political, and economic systems.

Levine (1986) also refers to Weber and then refers to the political

implications of mass literacy:

> The preparation and maintenance of written records by career officials is close to the essence of the classic, Weberian definition of bureaucratic administration. In the earliest bureaucratic systems, the corps of officials had a monopoly over the written word, but as the scale of governmental operations increased, effective political control over nations and empires necessitated the co-option of ever more literate agents. The general literacy of the population with which officials deal, normally completed by means of schools, is the logical endpoint of this process of co-option. Thus, there is an especially intimate connection between bureaucracy and literacy: mass literacy is the creation of bureaucratic institutions and, at the same time, one of the principal agencies of its irresistible diffusion. (1986, p. 157)

Levine argues that the functional literacy movement in effect was used to serve these political ends. The way functional literacy has come to be defined according to Levine, whether intentionally or not, "is just sufficient to bring its possessor within the reach of bureaucratic modes of communication and authority" and is therefore geared primarily toward the needs "of the state, employers, welfare agencies, authority generally" rather than towards the needs, wants, or desires of individual non-literates (p. 41).

This political side of literacy, as it is beginning to emerge in this discussion, appears frequently in the literature on literacy, especially in works which follow Paulo Freire's insistence on the political nature of literacy--that literacy is either a practice of domination or a practice of liberation. Many writers argue that the way literacy comes to be used reflects issues of privilege and exclusion (Kozol), of control and hegemony (Graff), and of the ideological constructions of specific communities (Street). These authors, however, never get around to addressing the conflict between dominant and minority languages in their discussions of the political nature of literacy and non-literacy.

One author who eloquently addresses the issue of the link between the extension of bureaucratic control over different populations to language homogenization and education is Ivan Illich (1981). In a discussion of how Spain, in the late 1400s, was one of the first European countries to pursue a policy of replacing local vernaculars with a standard language, Illich makes the following comments:

> The modern European state cannot function in the world of the vernacular. The new national state needs an <u>artificio</u> [tool], unlike the perennial Latin of diplomacy . . . . [Nebrija's [the proponent of a standardized Spanish in Queen Isabella's court)] important innovation was to lay the foundation for a linguistic

> ideal without precedent: the creation of a society in which the universal ruler's bureaucrats, soldiers, merchants, and peasants all pretend to speak one language, the language the poor are presumed to understand and to obey. Nebrija established the notion of a kind of ordinary language that itself is sufficient to place each man in his assigned place on the pyramid that education in a mother tongue necessarily constructs. In his argument, he insists that Isabella's claim to historical fame [rather than her part in sending Columbus to the New World] depends on forging a language of propaganda--universal and fixed like Latin, yet capable of penetrating every village and farm, to reduce subjects into modern citizens. (pp. 47-48)

A number of authors in the field of inquiry called language planning also touch on this issue of the political functions of language homogenization. Fishman (1971), for example, analyzes (among other issues) the political factors at work in a government's decision to establish a dominant language as part of its drive to expand its control, and to create political legitimacy, more governable uniformity, and national authenticity. A major political necessity for such expanding governments is to break down local identity and replace it with national loyalties, and literacy programs and educational systems become primary tools in this process. Assimilationist policies on the part of expanding governments, and the way in which minority groups both accommodate to and resist these policies all enter this discussion of language homogenization and of literacy for the more effective operation of bureaucracies.

My findings reflect some of these same issues. The situation I studied in Toronto, as I suggested in chapter 1, is one where minority groups, rather than living in remote, outlying areas, come to live in an already bureaucratized society. However, some of the same issues are in operation because forces of assimilation come into conflict with other formations of geographical, cultural, and language identity. While the people I interviewed seem to take for granted (and thereby accept the legitimacy of) the bureaucratic procedures they are compelled to undergo here, I found that they also deeply resent the impersonality of a system which does not respond to their more personal strategies of interaction.

Rockhill (1984) describes a similar situation in Los Angeles. Latinos, she says, have commodity and interpersonal exchange practices which differ from mainstream North American practices. They are accustomed to practices of reciprocation and the development of help networks. They are unprepared for the convoluted and impersonal bureaucratic system in California in which a primary principle, according

to Rockhill, "is to establish ineligibility for benefits" (p. 20). She writes, "Latinos used to a more personal way of exchange are vastly unprepared for the impersonality and indifference of American institutions. They must shift from a system based upon mutual reciprocity" (p. 20).

I also found, however, that the people in my sample nevertheless often manage bureaucracies effectively mainly by learning to manage paperwork and by developing networks of people to help them. This goes against Kozol's insistence that non-literates face insurmountable difficulties with bureaucratic paperwork--to read insurance forms, bills, leases, tax and eviction notices, banking forms and cheques, ballots and census forms, and surgery permission forms.

A number of authors report findings similar to mine. They suggest that, although bureaucratic paperwork creates reading and writing difficulties for non-literates, these reading and writing difficulties are often surmountable. Rockhill, for example, discovered that the women in her study could often read more of the English on the forms than they admitted to themselves (1986, p. 21). Fingeret (1983) also found that non-literate's in her sample could often manage forms and bills because they knew where to look for the charges or how to respond based on the format of forms with which they had become familiar even if they could not read most of the words (p. 135).

What the literature has to say, then, about bureaucratic uses of language has a great deal to do with authority and control, with (in Weber's language) rationalization of systems for the effective institutionalized operation of large systems aided by a literate, disciplined, and preferably homogenous populace. The difficulties individuals who do not read and write (particularly in the standard language) experience with such a system are highlighted by authors such as Kozol. But other studies, including mine, demonstrate that many non-literate people find ways of dealing with much of the bureaucratic writing required of them. The people I interviewed often experience a great deal of inconvenience rather than total paralysis as a result of not being able to use written English effectively. But they also experience structural realities of control and exclusion intertwined with cultural realities due to the unfamiliar rules of interaction expected by institutions and individuals they encounter in everyday life. They can often deal with the inconvenience of not having the written language

skills by getting others to help them. It is the social, cultural, and political dimensions of exclusion rather than lack of literacy and English which often create obstacles which are insurmountable.

The Classroom

My study deals in part with the non-literate's experience of the academic domain--specifically the classroom. What the people in my sample told me indicated disorientation and frustration in classroom situations because of their lack, they said, not only of literacy, but also of schooling in their own language. Even Angela, who is literate in Spanish but who had very little education as a young girl, told me that she stopped going to classes because she could not learn in a situation where the teacher made her cry because the teacher asked her to tell the class about things she knew nothing about.

A number of studies have made similar findings--that adults with little or no education tend to be uncomfortable and frustrated in second language classroom situations. There are, for example, a number of studies which deal with non-schooled and non-literate Southeast Asian refugees. According to Weinstein (1984), for example, research and the experience of English teachers and community workers concur that "non-literate refugees have less success in the classroom than do their literate peers" (p. 478). Tollefson (1985), in a review of what the literature was revealing about the Southeast Asian refugee resettlement program in the United States, reports that non-literate Southeast Asian adults, in comparison to their more literate and educated counterparts, "are not as well served" because they enroll in ESL programs less often, learn English more slowly when they do enroll, and drop out sooner (p. 757).

Alison d'Anglejan (1983), in a more explicit description of the experience of non-literate Southeast Asian adults in Montreal French as a Second Language classrooms reports,

> Our large-scale investigation into the patterns of individual differences associated with acute learning difficulties showed that lower levels of schooling and differing patterns of non-verbal reasoning ability, marginal literacy or functional illiteracy, and higher levels of classroom anxiety characterized the unsuccessful learners. (p. 125)

She also describes the non-literate's negative experience in class as "an extreme malaise . . . at finding themselves in language classrooms" (p. 125). She writes that videotapes taken of the classroom "showed them looking ill at ease and reluctant to participate in the repetition of

sentences or to respond to the teacher's probes" (Ibid).

Rockhill's description of the ESL classroom experience of the low-education Latino adults in her study has a similar ring to that of the research on Southeast Asian refugees. She found that their educational background was related to the kind of experience they had in ESL classrooms. She says,

> The more highly educated they were, generally the easier the classes. . . for they could understand grammar and could learn more readily from a book. Classes were particularly hard for those who had few years of schooling. (p. 27)

The problems in part relate to the anxiety they experience in classroom situations. The anxiety seems to stem from two things--they do not understand the talk about grammar and they feel uncomfortable with classroom modes of discourse, particularly the teacher-student interaction. They reported feeling uneasy "about being called on and making mistakes" and then getting confused (p. 26). This parallels what Rebeca and Pedro told me about the difficulties they had understanding the talk about grammar, especially verbs, in ESL classes.

Another kind of literature, however, suggests that difficulties faced by non-literates and low-education adults stems also from the fact that the school setting is in and of itself a social and cultural context. One of the implication of this line of argument is that the Western classroom practices, structures, and settings form a unique social domain into which participants must be socialized. Heath (1983), Szwed (1981) and others have suggested that the ways in which language in particular is used in the classroom are different from the ways in which many minority and working class children are accustomed to using language. Olson and Torrance (1981) remark that "standard English" is the language that the child learns not as a "mother tongue" in childhood but in the process of schooling (p. 251). This is part of the "intellectual consequences" debate which I described in chapter 1.

One of the outcomes of this "intellectual consequences" debate is that schooling effects cannot be equated with literacy effects and the recognition that the classroom is a setting with its own specific form of literacy practices which do not necessarily operate in other domains of life. Cole and Griffen (1980), in their summary of the debate, state, "Our experience as highly literate scholars urges on us the recognition that the tools of intellect acquired in the classroom and library carrel are <u>not</u> general purpose devices." They write that the activities served

by academic literacy, although they are important, "are not all of the purposes that engage most of us most of the time, and they are not all of a piece" (p. 361).

Fingeret (1983) also points to differences between the classroom and other dimensions of life. She argues that the classroom does not reflect the social context which characterizes most non-literates' everyday reality. Non-literates depend on trusted people in social networks, but the classroom situation does not allow them to depend on these networks. As Fingeret writes, in classrooms, they are "alienated from network members and subculture conventions" because formal learning situations tend to be structured in such a way that individuals go alone to classes full of strangers (p. 144). Fingeret's comments parallel my findings that the classroom is one of the few domains where the people I interviewed could not depend on their networks of helpers.

Heath (1983) does not merely suggest, however, that the classroom is simply one more domain which non-schooled individuals have not been able to include in the cluster of domains which make up their everyday lives. The formal classroom, she argues, tends to reflect cultural practices, meanings, and patterns of behaviour specific to the culture (class or ethnic) which controls the school. Heath concludes in her study that, although schools teach specific ways of using language, one of the reasons minority children fail in schools is that they become socialized at home and in their communities into ways of speaking about and interacting with written language which are different from the ways in which language is used in mainstream family, community, and school life. Mainstream families and communities continually socialize their children into schooled ways of using oral and written language both before and during their children's school years. For similar reasons, adults who neither belong to the majority culture nor have experience in the school domain would also have problems functioning in a mainstream classroom.

There is considerable substantiation in the literature, then, to my findings that second language classrooms are particularly frustrating and inaccessible for non-schooled and low-education adults. This has application both for English learning and literacy learning. Although there is little extensive analysis of what causes the major obstacles, the literature provides a range of suggestions, from the simple lack of reading and writing skills to a lack of metalinguistic knowledge (Rockhill, Tollefson), and from unfamiliar ways of talking about

experience and about written language (Heath) to unfamiliar ways of interacting with instructors (Rockhill, d'Anglejan). In addition, authors such as Heath and Fingeret argue that classrooms tend to be structured in ways which do not often parallel the social and cultural patterns familiar to many non-literates. What can be concluded, therefore, about the second language classroom is that not only does it require school specific uses of reading and writing, but it also tends to be structured around schooled modes of interaction and cultural ways of doing and knowing which alienate minority-language low-education adults.

The Workplace

The economic importance of literacy--literacy in the context of work--has been one of the more important focuses in literacy discussions, as I explained in the discussion on functional literacy in chapter 1. Functional literacy has come to have an almost exclusively employment centered meaning. As Levine observes,

> . . . functional literacy was at an early stage adopted by parties in a series of political arenas, military, educational and diplomatic, who needed a label for their convictions regarding the economic potential of, and justification for mass training for adults in basic literacy skills. In the course of the extended battle for resources, "How basic?" was converted into an economic rather than an educational issue. (p. 35)

Another example in this same tradition is the "human capital" argument for literacy, such as Bowman and Anderson (1963) advanced (that a 30-40% adult literacy rate is required for the "take off" point in a nation's self-sustaining economic growth).

The recent attention that has been focused on the high rates of illiteracy in industrial societies, such as the United States and Great Britain, has inspired renewed concern with the economic costs of illiteracy. Kozol (1985), for example, emphasizes the cost of illiteracy both to industrial societies and to illiterate individuals in those societies. In an extended argument strongly connecting literacy to the ability to effectively do the jobs required by a technological society, Kozol emphasizes risk to the individual and cost to society from the misuse of expensive machinery due to the non-literate's inability to read manuals, instructions, and warnings.

My findings, however, bring into question this direct connection between literacy and the ability to effectively carry out what is required by many of the jobs available in North American, urban work

contexts. I found that the few people in my sample who had regular work needed only limited kinds of reading and writing skills to perform their jobs. Other studies suggest the same point--that many job situations require only limited kinds of literacy skills. Heath (1983) found that, in the mill towns she studied, the "residents have few occasions for reading and writing on the job" (p. 233). She found that the few workers who needed to read and write on the job usually did little more than use a limited stock of well known abbreviations to label containers and to order parts. A small number of the employees occasionally needed to write notes or brief reports. Written language to be read at work was limited to signs identifying trash cans and washrooms, plus a bulletin board with occasional public notices, which are often communicated as well in oral form (1980, p. 130).

Similarly, Graff (1979) says of mid-nineteenth-century Ontario that "the uses and demands made on literacy can all too easily be exaggerated . . . . Much skilled work consisted of practical knowledge, job experience, and good work sense and abilities" (p. 302). He goes on to say that, even for non-manual workers, although they "had a more pressing and instrumental need for literacy skills," the kind of skills they were more likely to use were "automatic responses" and "rule of thumb techniques" (p. 303). He summarizes this line of argument by saying, "Simply, high degrees of literacy were often not required for work or welfare" (Ibid).

Levine (1986) provides a detailed account of how literacy enters into the domain of the workplace in a contemporary industrial community in England. He distinguishes in his study between large firms and small firms in the way literacy operates for non-literates in terms of getting employment. Levine found that the large firms he surveyed do not tend to hire non-literate staff. Yet he also found that the non-literates in his sample tended to regularly find employment because they tended to go to smaller firms where "there is little concern with official regulations, credentials or job demarcations" (p. 132). Levine points out, however, that this is not often simply because non-literates are rejected by large organizations; rather, non-literates often prefer smaller firms because in small firms they are permitted to do skilled work, they experience more job mobility, and they make better money. Thus, according to Levine, "the small entrepreneur can get skilled work out of an unqualified employee without paying the market rate, and the

employee is better off than he would be doing the least skilled jobs in large plants" (p. 132).

Levine goes on to discuss the obstacles non-literates face in getting employment with large firms. The process of getting employment, he argues, has three stages: 1) job search 2) selection 3) job performance (p. 138). The second stage, the selection stage, is where literacy becomes a particularly important factor according to Levine. He distinguishes between two kinds of literacy at this stage--job literacy and employment literacy:

> A rough distinction can be introduced between two justifications employers use for desiring literate recruits. The first derives from any elements of the work cycle or set of job tasks that require the worker to read or write--this can be termed 'job literacy'. The second and more general justification is in terms of the employers' perceived need to document aspects of the relations that exist between themselves, employers, trade unions and the state--which can be called employment literacy. (p. 139)

Job literacy is in effect the literacy needed for the third stage of getting employment, job performance. Levine, however, argues that, at the screening stage, personnel officers have little justification for preoccupation with an applicant's job literacy because he found that

> . . . there was a negligible 'job literacy' element in the content of most of the numerically large job categories . . . . Where reading was necessary in these jobs, it largely entailed simple instructions that used a highly restricted vocabulary and syntax . . . . In non-supervisory manual roles, writing was restricted to initialling, ticking or logging in figures or coded categories. (p. 144)

Yet job screening practices, according to Levine, often include high literacy screens. He writes,

> The majority of lower grade jobs . . . contained no significant literacy elements but a minority had a small character recognition and reading component . . . . Yet roughly only one half of 1 per cent of the 17,000 jobs covered were effectively available to adults unable to complete the application forms. (pp. 148-49)

Thus, it is the screening practices rather than the actual job requirements which disqualify non-literates from employment in larger firms. He concludes, "Most of the mechanisms [that lead to discrimination against illiterates] are intimately bound up with modern training and personnel procedures" (p. 148).

"Why, then," Levine asks, "do organizations expend effort to recruit only literate employees when the work they will do does not entail and will not benefit from their literacy skills?" (p. 146). He gives a

number of answers, such as the ignorance personnel officers have of details about what really happens on the shop floor, and the "bureaucratic inertia" which generates forms and records designed by highly literate staff. He also argues that, on a more intentional level, personnel officers "use literacy as a proxy for cooperativeness and 'trainability' among recruits" (p. 149). But the reason which is of particular importance here is what he calls 'employment literacy'. Employment literacy has to do with employers' legislated or contractual obligations to inform the employees about health and safety precautions and employees' rights. Large organizations often fulfill these obligations by providing written information and ensuring that its employees are literate. Levine summarizes this issue as follows:

> While contemporary manufacturing technologies mainly require very low levels of job literacy, the employment relationship is increasingly mediated by state regulation and intervention. Where legislation places an obligation on organizations to provide information to employees, this may be interpreted as imposing a literacy requirement on the work force. (p. 149)

Thus, employment literacy rather than job literacy appears to create some of the primary obstacles for non-literates in finding employment with large firms.

Levine's distinction between job literacy and employment literacy can be extended to language requirements in the work domain. It is appropriate to ask whether it is primarily employment English (credentialling, legislated regulations, screening practices) or job English (actual use of English on the job) which excludes Hispanos from better employment alternatives. Like literacy, English requirements exist regardless of other skills a person possesses and would therefore seem to be an employment screening device more than a job related necessity. Various studies conduced in industrialized countries where English is the standard language show that English is essential for finding employment that is not menial. These studies, however, do not make the distinction between job English and employment English. Tollefson (1985), in his review of the literature on resettlement programs for Southeast Asians, reports that "English proficiency has the highest correlation with employment" (p. 756). Mata (1985b), in his study of Spanish-speaking immigrants in Toronto, found that English language proficiency is "prerequisite" for moving out of "job stagnation" in low-paying, unskilled kinds of employment. He writes, "Statistical tests . . . have shown that lack of English language proficiency is

closely associated with the likelihood of being unemployed and performing unskilled work" (p. 5).

Studies which relate English proficiency to employment rarely distinguish between oral and written second language skills. Tollefson briefly mentions that the reason employers most often give for expecting English proficiency is that speaking skills are "important for asking questions and reporting problems, while listening skills are cited as the greatest overall need" (p. 758). This is one indication of job English as opposed to employment English and would suggest that English reading and writing skills are not as important as oral English skills on the job. Blackburn and Mann (1979), however, in their study of an industrial community in England, found written English skills to be important. "Literacy in English," they write, "was without question the most important formal requirement. Without the ability to read and write in English, an applicant could work at only labouring and cleaning jobs" (p. 143). But they do not make clear why this is the case.

As we saw earlier, however, various studies indicate that the acquisition of English proficiency, oral or written, depends heavily on higher levels of first language literacy and schooling. Thus, it is primarily individuals with many years of formal education who successfully learn English as a second language, and they learn both spoken and written language skills at the same time. It would therefore be rare to find a proficient speaker of English as a second language who could do little or no reading and writing in English, not because such a condition does not exist, but because English is traditionally taught in a way which does not cater to non-literate and non-schooled individuals.

Literacy relates to employment in this indirect way, then, because English proficiency depends on schooled literacy, and employment is related to English proficiency. Mata's (1983) findings corroborate this indirect relationship. His findings are of particular significance for my study because he surveys the hispanic population of Toronto, which is the same general population that I deal with. Employment status, he finds, relates to education and training, not by itself, but accompanied by English proficiency. He acknowledges that education is "a resource to escape unskilled work," but says that "it can be seen in the tables that it is not a major factor" because, even in the top professional and educated group, up to 15 per cent are working in unskilled jobs (p. 20).

It is those in the professional and educated group who also know English who are most likely to escape job stagnation. He also finds a relationship between the completion of post secondary education in Canada and better income (p. 19), and that education attainment in Canada is related to command of English. Of training programs he notes that "there is a positive association between being trained and earning a higher income" (p. 39), but he also reports that those with job training are among those groups of people most likely to be proficient in English (p. 38). Thus English proficiency, schooling, and training all seem to go hand in hand. One does not precede the other.

Rockhill (1982) makes a similar point. She writes that learning English, even if it is essential, is not enough to lead to better employment opportunities for Latinos in Los Angeles because "too much else is needed to break out--things like educational credentials, legal status and youth--over which they have no control" (p. 31). She points out that

> If a person has all of these [legal status, education, and proper credentials], knowing English can make a difference, otherwise its impact will be minimal. In time, too, it seems that people become aware of <u>how much</u> English would be required to advance up the occupational ladder, and they begin to feel how unrealistic it is for them. (pp. 19-20)

In sum, then, non-literate non-English speaking individuals find, as in the language classroom, that it is difficult to get beyond the bottom levels in the work domain. The ways in which literacy and English competency overlap and relate to employment are complex. Levine's distinction between the requirements of job literacy and employment literacy provides a useful distinction for describing where the obstacles lie for non-literates and non-English speaking adults--primarily at the screening process, which is largely out of their hands. Although Levine's research deals specifically with British industrial workplace and hiring practices, his findings raise important issues about how large organizations exaggerate literacy requirements in screening practices, how credentialling and state legislation discriminates against otherwise capable non-literates, and how non-literates tend to prefer employment in small firms which have less of a tightly defined job category system and which are less credentials oriented. And in terms of second language proficiency, the literature also suggest that oral English proficiency, although an important factor for moving out of the lowest paying manual categories of employment, is not enough if it is not accompanied by

credentials or training, both of which depend on English, which depends on English learning (ESL), which in turn depends on mother-tongue literacy/previous schooling.

Summary of Domains

As I have argued above, a study of the various overlapping domains in which written language has a part reveals the way in which literacy operates in the everyday lives of people. A wide range of studies tend to corroborate many of my findings, such as the fact that many non-literates manage to function effectively in many of the domains which they daily encounter, that barriers are often more related to social obstacles and cultural differences than to lack of literacy skills, that religious practices provide important applications for literacy and can bring to literacy many of its ideological characteristics, and that the second language classroom and the workplace are two domains in which it is particularly difficult for low-education and minority-language adults to operate in, and so forth. Now that I have discussed the domains, I can now turn to a consideration of what the literature has to contribute to my findings on literacy practices and functions.

MANAGING LITERACIES

In chapter 4, I discussed three aspects of the way in which those I interviewed managed their difficulties using written language in Spanish and in English: 1) the strategies they use to help them manage, often effectively, with little or no literacy and little or no English; 2) their perceptions about what uses they feel literacy has in English and Spanish; and 3) their feelings of inadequacy and exclusion in the face of their inabilities to use literacy in Spanish and English as they would like. In what follows I will discuss what the appropriate literature has to contribute to these three issues of strategies to manage illiteracy, uses for literacy, and perceptions of inadequacy and exclusion.

Strategies

A number of studies have focused on the reading and writing practices people actually engage in in their everyday lives. Scribner and Cole (1981), for example, focused in a general way, not only on the linguistic features of the Vai reading and writing system, but also on the actual reading and writing practices the Vai engage in (p. 236). They did not base their study, however, only on the non-literate individuals in the Vai communities. I found that the people in my sample with few literacy skills employ a variety of strategies to cope with written language.

Both Heath (1983) and Hymes (1980) argue that people have options and choices open to them in language use. Hymes, although he does not focus specifically on literacy, uses the notion of a repertoire of ways of speaking. Such a repertoire, in addition to having grammatical, lexical, and morphological components, also includes medium, function, and style components (p. 27). Hymes also argues that the fundamental relation between speech and writing is not primarily one of graphemic representation and structure, but "of choice of means within communicative repertoires" (p. 30). It is in extending this notion of choice between alternative means within one's language repertoire that a discussion of strategies arises.

Levine (1986) makes specific reference to the variety of strategies open to non-literates. He observes that

> . . . print is an incidental and auxiliary feature of a great many social situations and settings. There are many substitutes for it and, for those that need them, strategies for circumventing it. It is very hard to identify a set of social transactions which can only be carried out via writing and which are absolutely necessary to adequate functioning, however this is defined. (p. 38)

Levine also speaks of the way in which non-literates develop ways of "accommodating". He writes that "to a greater extent than many other physical, psychological and social handicaps, it is possible to make an accommodation to illiteracy" and that non-literate adults often display ingenuity and develop a set of skills which either reduce literacy's demands or allows them to find substitutes for it (p. 123). Similarly, Cook-Gumperz and Gumperz (1981) comment that non-literates can be "every bit as resourceful in using the tools at hand, and as innovative in responding to changing conditions as literates" (p. 93).

Kozol (1985) argues, however, that statements depicting the ingenuity and resourcefulness of illiterates do more harm than good because such images hide the reality of exclusion and paralysis many non-literates and semi-literates feel (p. 11). My findings, however, suggest that a non-literate's resourcefulness and feelings of paralysis can co-exist and occur simultaneously. It would therefore contribute to the reification of the non-literates' experience to stress one extreme instead of another when both are present. It does not follow that because people are resourceful they therefore feel satisfied with their situation. My findings suggest just the opposite--that the people I interviewed considered their strategies to be inadequate.

Fingeret (1983) uses a continuum to include the two extremes. One

extreme reflects dependence and paralysis and the other reflects resourcefulness and success at managing the economic and social world. As I explained earlier in the section on mobility in the city, the extreme characterized by paralysis she calls "local" and the extreme characterized by resourcefulness she calls "cosmopolitan". These terms include geographical, class, and cultural levels of mobility and immobility. There are not clear-cut boundaries on this continuum and no one factor will place an individual clearly at one extreme or the other. Rather, most non-literates fall somewhere between the two. Thus, Fingeret uses a combination of factors to describe the degrees of dependence and independence, and senses of helplessness and potency experienced by a particular non-literate. The combination of factors include the following:

> . . . the extent to which network membership is heterogenous and includes highly educated and literate adults; the amount and quality of interaction with the institutions and expectations of the literate society [and how these expectations] are decoded and responded to; and the amount of geographical and cultural mobility reflected in lifestyle and network composition. (p. 141)

Fingeret's conclusion is that adult non-literates, when observed in their social environment, are often found to be operating successfully, but, at the same time, confronting a social definition of themselves as deficient, incompetent, and dependent. She suggests that success has more to do with non-literates coming to recognize their potency in the face of social definitions which suggest the contrary than in having or not having literacy skills (p. 145).

A number of authors, then, write about the fact that non-literates often have strategies to deal with written language. Few studies provide analyses, however, of the range of strategies non-literates develop. Of the five categories of strategies I discovered in the interviews I conducted--use of scribes, limited forms of literacy, memory, experimentation, and avoidance--the only category developed extensively in the literature is the use of scribes. I found no discussion, for example, of the way in which semi- and non-literates often use their memories effectively to manage complex details of everyday practices (such as cooking elaborate recipes or successfully navigating around large cities). I also found no discussion of the strategy of learning by experimentation--retracing one's steps, for example, after getting lost and then trying again until one learns the way, or the use of smell, touch, and sight, or trying out small quantities of unfamiliar products

while shopping.

There is some discussion in the literature about the strategy which I call limited literacy. The anthropologist Goody (1968), for example, distinguishes between restricted and elaborated forms of literacy. In another place, he argues that the practices of list making and record keeping were historically important in the evolution of more sophisticated forms of human thought (1977). According to Goody, these restricted forms of writing provided an intellectual technology which permitted humans to shift the primary work of the brain from remembering details to seeing the interrelationships between the categories into which those details fell. This line of argument has little relevance to my study, however, because the people I interviewed do not concern themselves with the interrelationships which may exist between the numbers and letters they use to help them remember things or get places.

Scribner and Cole's study of the Vai in Liberia (1983) contains a brief description of list making and record keeping. Vai literates sometimes use their writing systems to keep farm records, for example. This is an example which supports their conclusion that individual literacy skills, rather than reflecting a generalized competency, tend to be extremely context specific and reflect literacy practices developed for specific uses and settings. A more elaborate form of record keeping is described by Street (1986) in his discussion of the way in which small-town Iranian entrepreneurs adapted Qu'ranic literacy into a kind of commercial record keeping literacy. But these examples arise from rural contexts where such practices are undertaken only by specific individuals who have chosen to learn those forms of literacy as an acquired role. They do not reflect the urban context where everyone, non-literates and semi-literates included, have the urgent everyday need to deal with a complex print-dominated society. Scribner and Cole's (1981) findings in particular, however, suggest that the strategies non-literates devise for dealing with complex North American urban settings are likely specific to the needs they face, and that new needs that arise require the learning of new skills.

A number of authors discuss limited forms of literacy in urban settings. As mentioned earlier, Heath (1983) and Szwed (1981) mention the shape, colour, format, and location cues provided by public print. Kozol (1985) briefly mentions how non-literates depend on logos and well recognized name brands when they shop (p. 24). But I found little

discussion in the literature of the way in which non-literates manage to get meaning from pictures, calendars, and maps. Burnaby and MacKenzie (1985) mention that the Cree are proficient readers and drawers of maps. I found no discussion of the ways in which basic numeracy can help minority-language adults operate in a dominant-language urban context while using their own language. Another form of limited literacy I discussed in chapter 4 is paper management skills. Rockhill briefly touches on this kind of literacy skill in her description of the way in which Latino women manage to deal with the bureaucratic forms they receive (1982, p. 21). Fingeret (1983) also refers to the fact that many reading and writing tasks are "formulaic in nature" and therefore allow the non-literate to learn to decode the format without reading most of the actual print (p. 135).

Avoidance is another strategy I discussed in chapter 4 which is rarely discussed in the literature. Rockhill (1982) mentions that women retreat to their homes because they fear they cannot "defend" themselves without English. Kozol (1985) gives examples of non-literates avoiding job promotions because of their need to avoid test situations. But these examples only begin to offer insight into the kinds of situations non-literates come to avoid. This avoidance strategy is closely connected to the experience of exclusion, which is discussed near the end of this chapter.

The one strategy that a number of authors do address in some detail, however, is the strategy of using scribes--of getting others to help. A number of studies provide examples of the way in which scribes function in a variety of societies. Burnaby and MacKenzie (1985) describe how the Rupert House Cree solve the problem presented by French, English, and two different Cree writing systems by spreading out scribal roles in the different languages and orthographies to different members of an extended family. Scribner and Cole (1983) describe how only certain men aspire to learn the Vai script in Vai society (p. 238). These examples illustrate that not all societies expect everyone to be individually capable of reading and writing the written language they encounter.

The urban context I studied is not entirely distinct from rural African and Northern Canadian contexts in terms of the way non-literates tend to develop networks of helping relationships in order to deal with written language. A number of studies have described this phenomenon. Fingeret (1983), for example, found in her study that non-literate

individuals tend to

> . . . create social networks that are characterized by reciprocal exchange; networks offer access to most of the resources individuals require, so that it is unnecessary to develop every skill personally. (p.134)

This description, of course, characterizes the more "cosmopolitan" or independent non-literate. But both the more local and the more cosmopolitan non-literate tend to develop networks. There are a number of differences, however. The cosmopolitan's networks extend into many social contexts, including highly literate and professional individuals, and the relationships are a reciprocal exchange of non-literate services for literate services (construction or repair expertise for legal advice, for example). The local literates' networks, however, are less likely to extend regularly into other social contexts and less likely to be reciprocal. In the extreme, the local non-literate has very asymmetrical and dependent network relationships which result in geographical, social, and economic immobility (p. 135).

A number of other writers also discuss the way in which different scribal roles can be spread out to different people, especially in minority-language communities in North American urban settings. It is an issue, according to Szwed (1981), which has not been explored sufficiently. He describes this phenomena as follows:

> Consider the case of ethnic or immigrant neighborhoods, where such a distribution [of a great variety of literacy skills spread throughout the community] has a considerable historical background--that is, where certain individuals have served (and continue to serve) as interpreters of the law, citizens' benefits and rights, and the like, as well as readers and writers of letters and public documents. (p. 15)

Similarly, Rockhill (1984) describes how Latinos in Los Angeles develop networks of helpers to assist them with their life in the United States. Her description of networks of helpers goes beyond the use of scribes, per se, because it extends beyond reading and writing to a general network of people who will do favours. Referring to the health care system in California, she writes, "Help is crucial to getting by without knowing either English or the maze of bureaucratic regulations in the health care system" (p. 24). The new immigrant survives in this impersonal system, Rockhill claims, by

> . . . constructing a network of Spanish-speaking people who know their way around the city, who can provide housing, jobs, assistance and information about how to get by . . . . [T]ypically they would gradually build into their network some one or two people who were

> native to the U. S. but fluent in Spanish; and who could act as a bridge between the barrio and the dominant society. (pp. 25-26)

Both Rockhill and Fingeret describe how the people they interviewed choose the people who become their helpers. This parallels my findings about the preferences my informants expressed for certain helpers over others. According to Fingeret, the choice of scribes often depends on the amount of personal information which must be shared in a given reading or writing task. Non-literates often ask more intimate friends to help with literacy tasks which are more personal, even if those friends are not as literate as other less trusted people in their network. One important dimension of network building, therefore, is finding trustworthy individuals for more personal tasks (p.135). Another dimension of creating networks has to do with a non-literate's sensitivity to what will "alienate, please, or physically remove" them from network members (p. 137). This includes knowing how to gauge the number of times one may request help. Thus, well developed interpersonal skills are characteristic of non-literates who have extensive and effective networks.

Rockhill uses the distinction (borrowed from Valle and Vega, 1980) between natural and formal support systems to point out that Latinos prefer a natural support system to formally structured service organizations because they perceive the agents of such organizations to represent the interests of the bureaucracies. These agents are not seen to have the best interests of the Latinos at heart. Another important reason to the Latino for preferring the natural support system, according to Rockhill, has to do with language. She writes, "The more that one can depend upon help from within a natural support network, the less language is experienced as a barrier" (p. 35).

Fingeret's analysis of networks created by non-literates and Rockhill's description of network building among Los Angeles Latinos parallel what I found in my study. Those I interviewed also placed importance on developing networks of trusted helpers, and most of them preferred developing their own networks of trusted helpers rather than having to depend on institutions. Their abilities to engage their social world reflected highly developed interpersonal and social skills regardless of language obstacles. María's reference to the need for <u>chispa</u> (spark) illustrates this point. Thus, networks provide a way of managing everyday literacy requirements and operate often effectively as

an alternative to the mainstream system which expects each person individually to possess the given set of skills.

Only in the discussion of scribes, then, does the literature provide substantial input related to my findings on strategies. Although the use of scribes is perhaps one of the strategies most frequently employed, especially by Hispano non-literates, there are noticeable gaps in the literature when it comes to the discussion of other strategies (such as limited forms of literacy, experimentation, avoidance, and use of memory) used by semi- and non-literates in their everyday lives.

Uses

Part of Scribner and Cole's (1981) notion of "practice" in their functional approach to the study of Vai literacy is that literacy practices are always applied "for specific purposes in specific contexts of use" (p. 236). Consequently, a practice-oriented approach, in addition to concerning itself with actual behaviour or strategies that people engage in to deal with written language, also looks for the reasons, purposes, or uses that people have for written language. An investigation of intention and understandings is as important as an investigation of behaviours in an analysis of practice.

In my discussion of the uses of literacy, I focused on what non-literates themselves understand literacy to be useful for in their own experience. However, only some of the literature I surveyed focuses on what semi- and non-literates themselves see such uses to be. Many studies in the field of literacy tend to focus instead on the uses mass literacy serves for societies as a whole--such as the political and economic uses of mass literacy, and the intellectual effects of literacy for the development of more sophisticated forms of culture and thought. The "intellectual consequences" debate, the "functional literacy" movement, and studies focusing on the political and ideological nature of literacy often treat literacy in more society-wide terms.

As I mentioned in chapter 1, the field of language planning has addressed in systematic ways the study of language use and language values in given multilingual settings. Researchers in the field of language planning have attempted to measure the uses and attitudes people have for the various languages that are in operation in the society in which they live. Sibayan (1983), for example, found in a language attitude survey of the Philippines that people of many ethnic backgrounds and languages often preferred to have their children educated in English

for its economic benefits, but many also had nationalistic and ethnic values which led them to desire education for their children in national and local languages as well. Thus, Sibayan concludes that "the Filipino is confronted with the problem of reconciling the demands made on him by his personal goals, ethnic loyalty, modernisation and nationalism" (p. 94). Similar studies have found that non-literates often prefer to learn literacy in the dominant language rather than in their mother tongue because they do not see the use for literacy in their own tongue (Shaw, pp. 106-107). These studies, however, are based on large-scale surveys and therefore tend to be oriented toward how language attitudes operate in societies as a whole.

A number of studies I have frequently referred to, however, do describe the everyday applications specific minorities within a society have for written language. Scribner and Cole (1981), Burnaby and MacKenzie (1985), and Heath (1983), for example, investigate the uses smaller communities within larger societies have for reading and writing. When comparing the schemes these authors have devised for categorizing the various uses, it becomes clear that there are many ways to do so. But in spite of differing models of categorization, comparison also makes clear that, although individual uses are often similar in different locations, the configurations which these uses take differ from place to place, encouraging different schematizations. It is the configurations of uses rather than the uses themselves which tend to vary between cultures and communities. The variation depends on how uses, technologies, practices, and knowledge are historically and socially organized and acquired.

Heath (1983), for example, separates the uses for reading from the uses for writing. The resulting analytical framework is more detailed than other schemes. She includes under reading such categories as instrumental, social-interactional, educational, news related, confirmation related, and recreational, and under writing such categories as memory related, message bearing, record keeping, financial, and expository. Not all of the uses occur in all three of the communities she studied, and the amount of time people engage in the uses that do appear in all three communities varies from community to community.

Scribner and Cole (1981) found that the uses the Vai had for their syllabic script range from letter writing to keeping personal journals and from record keeping for business purposes to the writing of

occasional signs. Literacy for religious purposes was largely restricted to Arabic, and the bureaucratic and formal schooling uses of literacy occurred in English. Burnaby and MacKenzie (1985) divide the functions of literacy in the different languages used in Rupert House into preserving messages across distances, religious observances, disseminating information, preserving information over time, and writing and reading for personal expression and enjoyment (p. 69).

The categories I used in my study resemble to some extent these schemes used by other writers. The categories I used include: everyday (instrumental) uses, learning, becoming aware, communicating, and work uses. Heath's categories of instrumental reading, and of memory related and message bearing writing all fall into my one category of everyday uses. I also included bureaucracy related reading and writing in this everyday category, but it is a kind of reading and writing that Heath does not find necessary to mention in much detail. Her two categories of social-interactional and oral message substitutes collapse into my one category of communicative uses for reading and writing. The category I call "uses for learning" she breaks into critical, educational, and recreational reading, and expository writing.

Although it is clear in this comparison of schemes that there is no standard approach to categorizing uses, it is also important to note that different kinds of categories emerge from different settings. For example, the people I interviewed used English newspapers for the purpose of learning English and for the advertising sections, but they used Spanish newspapers for getting the news. This is a configuration of uses for newspapers which would not emerge in the small English-speaking Appalachian mill communities which Heath describes. The uses for letter writing in different societies provides another good example of how uses vary, and how categories used in one context are not always appropriate for other contexts. The people in my study who are low-education working class people constantly send and receive letters, but primarily of a personal, relationship-maintenance nature which reflects their uprooted, immigrant and refugee situation. The low-education working class people from Roadville and Trackton in Heath's study, however, rarely write letters. They occasionally send notes or cards. The use of literacy for communicating over distance is structured differently yet again for the native people Burnaby and MacKenzie describe, and for the Vai Scribner and Cole describe. In both cases, communication over distance serves

important economic functions such as ordering and receiving supplies, and transactions for land and produce. These letters are not sent primarily for relationship-maintenance reasons. Thus, even the single practice of letter writing can differ according to function for different groups. Different categorization schemes, therefore, must be allowed to emerge for different social settings.

I have already mentioned how different uses for reading and writing often operate in different languages in multilingual situations. Saville-Troike (1982) points out that different languages in a multilingual situation come to serve different functions (p. 48). But these functions do not tend to divide neatly along language lines. Scribner and Cole describe how competition occurred between Arabic, English, and Vai writing systems for official, commercial, and religious purposes. In the end each writing system took on its own role in different facets of life--English taking the literacy role in government and civil affairs, Arabic remaining primarily in the liturgical and religious realm, and Vai being used for secular and pragmatic tasks. However, there continues to be some cross over (pp. 241-42). Burnaby and MacKenzie write that the only two functions for literacy that the Cree people as a group have integrated into their everyday lives are syllabic Cree letter writing and the literacy that is part of the religious observances. They have had little use for public print or for using writing to disseminate information. Non-Natives, however, who come into the community from the outside continue to have such information and public print translated into the Cree syllabic script. This suggests that language functions from different traditions can compete and can be pressured to change due to political, cultural, social, and economic forces in operation in a given context.

Although many individual uses may be shared between communities, then, differences exist between configurations or hierarchies for uses. Part of the complexity of these configurations of uses in multilingual situations is that literacy takes on different roles in different languages and that the different configurations of uses of one group can conflict and compete with the uses another group may have for literacy. This once again raises the political nature of language functions in multilingual settings.

Limitations and Exclusion

In chapter 4, I suggested that the negative side to literacy must be

included in an understanding of how literacy functions in the lives of the non-literates I interviewed. The negative aspect I also broke down into two categories which I called expressions of inadequacy and expressions of exclusion. Other studies which focus on uses people have for reading and writing primarily discuss literates rather than non-literates and therefore do not normally include this negative aspect of function. It is those studies which focus on the experience of non-literates in industrialized settings that address this negative aspect.

In Chapter 4, I described the sense of inadequacy and inferiority that the people I interviewed attached to their "managing" practices or strategies. Although they manage, they feel they have inefficient means available to them in comparison to those who can read and write. A number of authors also write about the inferiority non-literates can come to feel. Kozol (1985) emphasizes the fact that non-literates do not experience the choice that literates do in many areas of their lives. They can come to know, for example, only what others tell them (pp. 27-28). In this regard, he also identifies something which I also discovered in the interviews I conducted--the perception non-literates express of "not knowing". The people in my sample frequently divided the world into schooled people who know and those, like themselves, who do not.

The sociologist Erving Goffman (1968), in his work on the phenomena of stigma, provides an important model for the discussion of the negative way in which literacy functions in people' lives. He includes illiteracy in his list of items which people in Western society tend to stigmatize. He uses the word "management" (in much the same way I used it in chapter 4) to discuss how stigmatized individuals organize their lives to cope with what are perceived in society to be the negative characteristics they possess. He describes the different stages of the learning process through which stigmatized individuals often go. The final stage of learning he calls "passing", which is the attempt of a stigmatized person to pass as if she/he did not possess the unfavourable characteristic (p. 80). Kozol (1985) also refers to this attempt to "pass" as a way in which non-literates respond to the stigma they feel:

> Illiterates find it painful to identify themselves. In a print society, enormous stigma is attached to the adult non-reader. Early in the game we see the evolution of a whole line of defensive strategies against discovery by others. 'Lying low' and watching

out for 'traps' become a pattern of existence. (p. 31-2)

Doña Ana in my study vividly portrayed her attempts to "pass" in her account of consciously trying to learn how to conduct herself as a person "who knows" in order to avoid being identified as non-literate. This of course broadens the connotations that literacy comes to have for many people from the simple ability to use written language to notions of education, culture, and bearing.

Burnaby (1985) points out that not all societies place such a strong form of stigma on adult non-literates. Her description of how literacy roles are spread to different members of the Cree community and how those who are not literate are not stigmatized in Northern Canadian Native communities is a sharp contrast to what she refers to as the "high" and somewhat unrealistic "standard" that literacy has taken in mainstream Canadian society (p. xiv). This points to the way in which people attribute different meanings and uses to literacy in different societies.

The extreme form of negative functions of literacy in non-literates' lives, which goes beyond feelings of limitation and inadequacy caused by social stigma, are the ways in which outright exclusion is experienced. I suggested in chapter 4 that, although the individual's senses of exclusion varied somewhat in my sample, most expressed feelings of exclusion from two domains--ESL classes (particularly higher level classes) and from good employment opportunities. As we have seen, the literature corroborates my findings about the exclusion that occurs from ESL classes and from better jobs. Levine (1986), Mata (1983), Tollefson (1985), and Rockhill (1982, 1986) document various aspects of the exclusion which occurs due to employment literacy screens and second language and credentialling screens, all of which are tied to schooling and language learning.

Rockhill analyzes with particular clarity the way in which Latinos experience exclusion in Los Angeles. According to Rockhill (1982, 1984), they become trapped in a Spanish-speaking ghetto, excluded from natural English language-use situations which they feel they need to learn the English which is necessary for getting better employment. Rockhill found, as I did, that the people she interviewed frequently used the word <u>defenderse</u> in their accounts of life in North America. The word, as she describes it in her study, however, primarily has only one connotation--fighting for survival in a hostile environment, hostile not only because of unfamiliar English surroundings, institutions, and

culture, but also because of the crime ridden and gang dominated ghettos in which the Latinos live. Rockhill (1982) writes, "To defend oneself--this phrase echoes throughout the interviews. Upon arrival, it is the primary most urgent desire" (p. 9). In chapter 4, I used this term to illustrate two sides of the way in which those I interviewed talked about literacy. Rockhill's use of the word relates to only the negative side--barely managing in a difficult and dangerous environment. In my study, however, the people I interviewed use the word defenderse to refer to their attempt, not to fend off danger, but to stay afloat with dignity in an environment which is not particularly dangerous, but which they experience as obstacle ridden and characterized by exclusion and indifference.

Authors such as Rockhill, Kozol, and Goffman emphasize, then, the limitations and exclusion non-literates face. Studies of other societies and cultures demonstrate that not all societies impose such obstacles on non-literates. Goffman's notion of stigma is particularly important for explaining the way in which non-literates in highly literate societies often internalize the limitations and exclusion they experience and learn to manage their ascribed deficiency with such practices as "passing". The fact, however, that the stigma of non-literacy in the standard language exists only in certain societies suggests that it is a socially constructed phenomenon. The socially constructed nature of literacy is a point which has frequently surfaced in this chapter because it is a recurring theme in much of the literature. I will conclude this chapter with a discussion on this social construction theme because it summarizes much of what the literature in the end has to say about literacy.

CONCLUSION: Social Construction and Literacy

The literature which discusses the functions of literacy in specific contexts and locations points out, as we have seen, that functions at the individual level--both the positive aspects and the negative aspects--vary between societies (as Scribner and Cole demonstrate) and even between neighboring communities (as Heath shows). This variation in the uses for literacy between societies and groups is explained in the literature in terms of social construction. It is this social construction discussion which is perhaps one of the primary themes in current works in the field of literacy studies.

Scribner and Cole (1981), in their elaboration of a practice-based analysis of literacy among the Vai, provided a major push in orienting

literacy studies in this direction because they challenged existing assumptions and research approaches in literacy studies. In their functional approach, they defined practices in terms of social organization. Thus, they write, "Whether defined in broad or narrow terms, practice always refers to socially developed and patterned ways of using technology and knowledge." They then go on to explain that, in their investigation of literacy among the Vai, rather than focusing exclusively on the technology of a writing system, or on its "reputed consequences", they instead "approach literacy as a set of socially organized practices which make use of a symbol system" (p. 23).

Street (1984) makes this socially organized nature of literacy the central contention of his book entitled Literacy in Theory and Practice. As I explained in chapter 1, he distinguishes between what he calls the two models used in the analysis of literacy--the traditional autonomous model and the more recent ideological model. The autonomous model, he says, treats literacy as a technology which is expected to operate the same way in all contexts (p. 2). Such an approach to the study of literacy, he says, treats an ideologically structured phenomenon as if it were solely a neutral technological issue. The ideological model, he argues, is more useful than the autonomous model for the comparative study of literacy because particular practices and concepts of reading and writing for a given society depend on the context. He writes that such practices and concepts

> . . . are already embedded in an ideology and cannot be isolated or treated as 'neutral' or merely 'technical' . . . . The skills and concepts that accompany literacy acquisition, in whatever form, do not stem in some automatic way from the inherent qualities of literacy . . . but are aspects of a specific ideology. (p. 1)

In this discussion, Street uses the word "ideological" in a way which Mannheim would call the "general" concept of ideology. Mannheim, according to Berger and Luckman (1966), extracted the concept of ideology from its political context and used it to describe the way in which all human thought arises from the social context in which it exists (p. 9). No human thought is immune from this ideologizing influence. Thus, Street uses the concept of ideology in the sense that all humans perceive, understand, and value in culturally patterned ways. Literacy, as one set of practices within a culture, becomes perceived, understood, valued and consequently used in ways that have evolved in specific social settings. It is in this sense that Street considers literacy to be

ideological.

But within this "general" notion of ideology, the more specific political meaning of ideology continues to operate. Certain interests come to be served over others reflecting the exercise of power and of hegemony. Graff (1986) argues that one of the most important functions of literacy at the society level is its potential as a hegemonic force. One of the lessons to be learned from history, he feels, is that hegemony has been one of the more important social functions of literacy, more important even than the role it has had in technological, economic, and cultural development. He writes,

> From the classical era forward, leaders of polities and churches, reformers as well as conservatives, recognized the uses of literacy and schooling . . . . [T]hey came to conclude that if literacy were provided in carefully controlled and structured institutions . . . it could be a powerful force in achieving a variety of important ends. (pp. 129-30)

Graff (1979) illustrates this point in his book, The Literacy Myth, in which he argues that the literacy which was extended to the masses through schooling in mid-nineteenth-century Ontario was primarily motivated, not by economic or technological rationales, but by a "moral economy." This moral economy continues to exist, he claims, because ever since the early nineteenth century,

> . . . those without experience of education and without its badge of literacy have been perceived as inferior and pathetic, alien to the dominant culture, subversive to social order, unequipped to achieve or produce, and denizens of self-perpetuating cultures of poverty. (p. 51)

The task of schooling was to a large extent, therefore, a moral task--that of the "inculcation of values, habits, or attitudes to transform the masses" (p. 36).

However, such transformation is not simply carried out in an explicit or even an entirely conscious manner. I mentioned in chapter 1 Graff's description of the contradictory role of literacy a century ago both in the lives of individuals and in society as a whole. Literacy was perceived to be linked to social order, progress, and development in a modernizing industrial society (pp. xvi, 36). However, the social realities often contradicted this myth because, on the one hand, a very limited literacy was sufficient for the common activities of everyday life (p. 321), and on the other hand, patterns of inequality and stratification remained "relatively unaltered" regardless of whether or not one was literate (p. xviii).

Another aspect of the contradictory nature of literacy in mid-nineteenth-century Ontario was the way in which the lower classes and minorities participated in the belief that literacy and schooling could make a difference. Earlier, I mentioned Graff's use of Gramsci's (1973) notion of ideological hegemony. Graff argues that it is by means of the prevailing ideology that the established order is maintained as the "multitudes" give their consent to it (p. 36). In the case of Ontario a century ago, Graff concludes:

> Literacy, it seems certain, was not the benefit to individuals that it promised to be; nevertheless, it had sufficient impact at the level of skilled work and on its consensual acceptance for its larger limitations and other purposes to be blurred and largely ignored. Consequently, on the basic level of social and economic progress and those who determined it, literacy was more valuable to the society's goals and needs than to those of most individuals within it. (p. 321)

Rockhill (1982) pursues a similar line of argument to explain the way in which the lack of schooling and of English language proficiency operates in the experience of Latinos in present day Los Angeles. She also uses the notion of contradiction between how the Latinos account for their experience and the social realities in which they live (lack of employment, racism, and language dynamics). She writes that they hold on to "the mythology that English is essential to survival," but over time they seem to "become aware of <u>how much</u> English would be required to advance up the occupational ladder, and they begin to feel how unrealistic it is for them" (p. 20). Yet they tend to internalize the blame by seeing the problem "as a personal one of not knowing the language" (p. 31). According to Rockhill, it is difficult for them to come to terms with the reality that better job opportunities do not exist. Because so much else is needed, such as job credentials and legal status, English will not make a substantial difference in their lives (p. 30). They, however, do not often see this clearly and continue to attribute the fact that they are trapped in menial work "to personal failure to learn English, not [to] structures of work or of language in society" (p. 20).

Thus, similar to Graff, Rockhill implies that a kind of blurring occurs where social realities and public mythologies contradict each other as the people most negatively affected accept the myth of the simple connection between English/literacy and good employment. Rockhill makes a similar comment about the Latinos' experience of the California

health care system's use of bureaucratic language. She describes it as a two layered reality in which language is perceived by the Latinos on the surface to be the main barrier--a barrier to information, to a full understanding of how the system works, and to emotional support or direct contact. She points out, however, that beneath the surface language comes to be used in a bureaucratic way to result in "the legally mandated nonpresence of a people very much present," which distorts the experience of the people (1984, p. 37).

Ogbu (1974) makes a somewhat similar critique of the public school system in California. Subordinate minorities, he argues, do not benefit socially or economically from successfully completing an education. Consequently, although on the surface people who belong to the ethnic minorities voice a belief in the advantages of schooling, their actual response in the end (a high proportion of school failure) "constitutes an adaptation to their lack of full opportunity to benefit from their education in contrast to the dominant group" (p. 3). Yet, on the surface, they continue to voice the mythology that it is education which levels inequality. In this way they give their consent to the established order by internalizing the blame and attributing their status to personal failure.

These discussions of contradiction, inequality, and hegemony provide insight to the situation I studied in Toronto. My informants' perceptions of what it is to be non-literate and non-schooled reflect, as I have shown, strong senses of inferiority which extend to myths about ignorance and lack of civilization. The individuals in my sample respond to these myths about literacy, schooling, and English learning in a number of ways. Both Doña Ana and Angela have tried to learn as best they could over the many years they have lived how to behave in a civilized and educated manner by associating with educated and good people rather than with those like themselves who they perceive to know nothing. María has come to believe she has no choice but to get along without English classes or schooling because she no longer has the opportunity to learn due to age and other pressures in her life. Rebeca, however, insists on becoming literate and on learning English because she is on her own as head of the family.

It is interesting, however, that both María and Rebeca have no doubt that they can already perform the kind of work they wish they could get in Canada, but they also recognize that training credentials are

essential and are linked to literacy and English. Thus, they recognize that the language and schooling requirements are essentially employment screens which keep them from the kind of employment they had in mind when they came to Canada. Similarly, Pedro and Juan have acquired a somewhat higher level of English and literacy skills than the others I interviewed, and they have a basic level of employment, but they also recognize that training and credentials are essential for moving on to better employment opportunities regardless of the years of work experience they bring with them.

Thus, most of those I interviewed seem to understand the requirements placed on them, and yet they continue to hope that they and their children will be able to either surmount these incredible obstacles which contribute to exclusion, or somehow be lucky enough to get around them, with help. They, however, do not seem to question the legitimacy of these obstacles, and continue to internalize the blame, much like the Latinos Rockhill describes. Thus, the way they experience non-literacy and lack of English language skills in the end suggests a socially constructed consent and accommodation to the dominant ideology of education and employment opportunity.

It is important to add, however, that the way the people in my sample understand the connotations of schooling, literacy, and English proficiency does not stem only from a mainstream Canadian ideology which they encountered upon arrival. They brought with them their own Latin American (and perhaps national and local) ideology of the benefits, consequences, and implications of schooling and literacy which is similar, but not equivalent to the Canadian version. The people I interviewed clearly communicated that, where they come from, education is associated with Spanish culture and civilization, and that lack of schooling is associated with the uncultured ways of the lower class mestizo and Indian. Thus, two ideologies of literacy come into contact--that of the low-education Spanish-speaking immigrant and that of the mainstream schooled order in Ontario. Both must be contained in an explanation of the ways in which written language is perceived, used, and valued by low-education Spanish-speaking adults who live in Toronto.

The literature, then, particularly the literature which focuses on the uses and perceptions people themselves (as opposed to policy makers and the agents of official, educational, and employment related bureaucracies) have of the uses for literacy, demonstrates how literacy

practices and values are embedded in ideological or cultural structures. Patterns of uses, values, and responses vary not only between societies but also between communities and classes. In multilingual situations, literacies in different languages tend to take on a mixture of distinct, sometimes competing, and sometimes accommodating roles. These conflicting, competing, and accommodating dynamics include the relationship between languages and the relationship between orality and literacy both in the minority language and in the dominant language. Thus, the configuration of Spanish and English uses, along with the stigma and exclusion experienced by low-education Spanish-speaking adults all contribute to the ideological construction of literacy in their everyday lives.

CHAPTER 6--CONCLUSION

My central concern in this thesis has been the issue of making language decisions for adult basic education programs for minority-language groups. The study was based on a sociolinguistic approach to making language decisions. The conclusion to the study will therefore primarily focus on those issues which emerged in the investigation that would suggest some of the important parameters for guiding language decisions. The discussion will be broken down into four sections: the limitations that must be kept in mind in interpreting the results, a summary of the findings, implications for practitioners that arise from those findings, and suggestions for further research.

LIMITATIONS

It is important to keep the limits of this study in mind, both in terms of its original objectives and in terms of its final results. I explained some of the limitations in chapter 2. For example, I collected most of the data using only one method--interviews--rather than multiple forms of systematic data collection, such as extensive participant observation in each of the domains identified by the informants, or by interviewing other family members. As a result, the descriptions are not as detailed as they could have been, and the findings were not corroborated extensively. Also, I only interviewed a small group of people because of the limited time schedule I set for myself. I cannot therefore argue that my findings are representative of most low-education Hispanos. The fact that most of the women in my sample do not live in married situations, and that the men I interviewed on the average have higher levels of education and English proficiency than the women, suggest that my sample was not as stratified as it perhaps should have been.

A related weakness of the study is the way in which I lumped all low-education hispanic adults from a variety of countries into one cultural group as if the fact that they share a similar language and historical tradition means that they belong to the same culture. Many cultures and subcultures, however, can be found in Spanish-speaking Latin America.

These weaknesses, however, do not mean that the study was unsuccessful. The objectives from the start were limited. I did not set out, for example, to provide an extensive ethnographic account. Because my purpose was only to explore the uses low-education Hispanos make of written language, I used only one facet of what appear in a complete

ethnographic description. The results, as I planned, emphasize the perspective of the people I interviewed at the expense of the more empirical details of the literacy environments and practices which form the settings in which the people live. This is because my focus was on meanings, the primary data being people's own accounts of their experience of literacy.

One more limitation which is essential to keep in mind is that this study deals with only one minority group. It provides no indication of the extent to which other minority groups share or do not share similar experiences of written language. This investigation, therefore, does not provide the kind of data needed to provide detailed recommendations about how to make language decisions for all minority groups. What it does is to explore the field, so to speak, and in so doing to suggest a way of approaching the issue of making language decisions for adult basic education programs for minority groups. It is therefore the approach which is relevant for other groups, not necessarily the findings. This sociolinguistic approach to discovering the language functions for different communities will continue to be the focus of the section which follows.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this investigation, simply stated, has been to explore the roles that both Spanish and English written language have in the everyday lives of low-education hispanic adults in Toronto. The findings I reported in chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate that both Spanish and English forms of written language have important roles in Hispanos' lives.

But the findings also indicate that the language-use reality is not easily analyzed along simple, clear-cut lines. This reflects a problem in much of the literacy discussion to date. Too often literacy is discussed in terms of dichotomies in spite of the fact that everyday language use rarely falls into one or the other extreme suggested by a particular dichotomy. A number of authors call for a departure from the use of dichotomies in discussions of literacy--dichotomies such as literate/illiterate, reader/non-reader, pre-literate/literate, and print culture/oral culture. These dichotomies, according to Graff (1986), are not "interpretively rich or complex enough to advance our understanding" (p. 124) because a given social setting contains a complex mix of variables. These variables tend to get dichotomized only in analysis.

People do not fall, for example, into two camps of those who can read

and write and those who cannot. Few people cannot read and write at all, and, as I have shown, those who themselves cannot read and write well often gain access to written language in other ways. Heath (1983) points out another dichotomy--the oral/literate split--which is often used to categorize entire communities into two separate traditions. This dichotomy hinders literacy discussions from capturing the way in which the oral and written forms of language overlap and affect each other in culturally patterned ways even in highly literate societies. Heath emphasizes that "the patterns of interactions between oral and written uses of language are varied and complex" (p. 344). Similarly, Street (1984) argues, "The [intellectual and economic] claims made for literacy tend to overstate the differences between literacy and orality and to hide the fact that in most societies there is an overlap and a 'mix' of modes of communication" (p. 110).

Multilingual situations present yet another level of language-use complexity which also tends to get split into two poles--the dominant-language/minority-language dichotomy. For the purposes of this study, for example, it would be easy to dichotomize the uses of written language into English uses and Spanish uses, or English domains or Spanish domains. My findings reveal, however, that a complex mix or overlap occurs in which English enters into the everyday lives of Hispanos on a regular basis, but also in which Hispanos regularly take Spanish into primarily English domains to accomplish the purposes they have for entering those contexts. When the literacy/oral mix is combined with this English/Spanish mix, what results is a complex language use reality in which the only feasible (or, in literacy terminology, "functional") choices are not (as often conceived) Spanish or English and literacy or illiteracy. Other combinations of language variables are available for choice.

My findings, then, provide one example of the complex mix of language variables in local social settings. However, even in my attempt to account for the variety and complexity, the multiple categories that get used inevitably separate reality into distinct compartments. Thus, in much the same way that dichotomies misrepresent language-use reality, the categories I use, when taken at face value, also misrepresent the fluidity and complexity of the phenomenon under investigation. Domains, for example, are not mutually exclusive. Bureaucracies, schools, church, and work flow into each other and intertwine in many ways. All domains

penetrate the home. There are two sides, then, to my analysis of literacy. On the one hand, separate categories must be devised in order to give an account of the different kinds of written language and written language practices, which results in talk about different kinds of literacies in different domains. On the other hand, however, there is overlap and mix, not only between domains, but also between literacy practices and functions, which requires talk about the overlap and mix of categories.

What follows is an attempt to give an overview of the findings which takes into account, not only the way in which categories flow into each other, but also the way in which the configurations of language variables come together differently in different domains. To do this, I will bring together some of the levels which I separated for purposes of analysis in chapters 3, 4, and 5. This will involve summarizing, domain by domain, first the empirical element (kinds of written language and written language practices) and then the more subjective elements (kinds of literacy functions). And because the dominant/minority-language issue in the end remains my primary focus, I will conclude each section with an overview of the place of Spanish and English in these practices and functions.

Written Language Practices

Practices involving written language, or "literacy events" as Wagner, Messick, and Spratt (1986) would call them, include not only reading and writing acts, but also other ways (or strategies) of using written language. Because this study focuses on individuals who have few if any reading and writing skills, I have been especially interested in the strategies semi- and non-literates use to deal with written language. Thus, in this summary, I will first give an overview of the kinds of reading and writing practices my informants reported as occurring in different domains, and then turn to the strategies they use to manage literacy in different domains.

Reading and Writing Practices

When the practices reported as happening in the various domains are compared, it becomes clear that the home tends to have more variety than other domains. The home contains a wide variety of kinds of written materials such as newspapers, advertisement propaganda, correspondence and bureaucratic mail, school work, packaged products with instructions, Bibles, calendars and telephone books. This range demonstrates how other

domains penetrate the household on a regular basis.

A more limited range of kinds of literacy events tend to occur in other domains. Getting around the city involves a very specific kind of literacy--subway, bus station, and street signs which bear names and numbers, shop names, and maps. Shops abound with price tags and print on packages and posters. Public offices in large buildings also use public signs and require interaction with bureaucratic written language. Each kind of office usually requires its own specific form of literacy--banks require check endorsing practices, statement books, and withdrawal and deposit slips, whereas health care forms and bills have their own format as do telephone bills and immigration paperwork. The religious domain also requires its own kinds of reading (very little writing)--Bible passages, prayerbooks, hymnbooks.

Schools and classrooms (in this study primarily ESL classes) require kinds of reading and writing that are unique to the classroom, except as schoolwork carries over into the home domain. The reading and writing that is associated with the workplace can usefully be divided into employment literacy and job literacy, the former being part of the job search and job application/screening process, and the latter varying significantly according to the kind of job, but often requiring only limited kinds of literacy (e.g., labels and labelling codes, menus, taking orders, public signs and warnings).

A multilingual situation adds further to the variety of kinds of reading and writing described above. This study has demonstrated that, not only do both Spanish and English reading and writing practices regularly take place in the lives of those who participated in this study, but also that Spanish and English literacy often serve different roles. In the home, for example, English reading and writing tends to operate primarily for the purpose of learning English, and, in a limited mixed-with-Spanish way, for dealing with bureaucratic mail, and looking at advertising sections of the newspapers. Spanish written language, however, is involved in a broader range of activities, from correspondence and newspaper reading to religious activities and use of lists and calendars.

The written language used outside of the home for finding one's way around the city and for shopping involves primarily limited forms of number and letter recognition to identify and read the signs, maps, and prices the people encounter. Even though much of this public print,

including numbers, is intended for English speakers, Hispanos can often use it in a limited way for their own purposes without knowing much English.

Written language encountered in bureaucratic settings, although it appears almost entirely in English, is also often managed with minimal reading and writing skills that operate, it would seem, in a Spanish/English mix. Hispanos who are non-literate in Spanish and/or English can learn to identify the pertinent numbers or pieces of information on forms and bills and deal with them in formulaic ways--paying telephone bills or cashing cheques, for example. More difficult, less frequent forms can almost always be dealt with in Spanish through the members of one's network, some of whom will likely be able to operate proficiently in both Spanish and English.

The written language encountered in the religious domain occurs exclusively in Spanish. There is no Spanish/English mix in this domain. This suggests that the religious domain requires a domain-specific form of literacy. But if, as Heath (1983) suggests, the ways of using language in the religious practices of devoutly religious people can strongly influence their ways of using language in other domains, this Spanish language domain cannot be disregarded as extraneous or unconnected to the uses of written language in English or in other domains.

The classroom (primarily the ESL classroom, because other kinds of classrooms are rarely accessible to non-schooled Hispanos) is one of the more self-contained domains, where a student has no option but to personally deal with English written language. English, however, is not the only written language regularly encountered in ESL classrooms. Literate students use their own written languages to help them learn English.

The work domain is linked closely to the school domain because employability relates to the English proficiency and credentials that come with schooling. There is both a direct connection in terms of searching for jobs and filling out applications, but also an indirect connection in the form of credentialling which depends on training, which depends on English proficiency, which depends to a large degree on Spanish schooling. Actual use of English reading and writing on the job, however, is often limited and routine, particularly in industrial settings. The kitchen experience of one of my informants, Angela, also

demonstrates that job literacy need not take place exclusively in English. She writes Spanish labels on ingredients containers and uses Spanish recipes translated from English at the same time that she is learning kitchen English. And many work situations open to non-English speaking people become non-English speaking settings, except when employees must interact with English-speaking management.

It can be seen, then, that both Spanish and English written language have differing roles in the various domains encountered by low-education Hispanos and that the written language operates in different ways from domain to domain. In certain domains such as the streets, on the job, and to some degree at home, Spanish and English written language merge and overlap and other alternative strategies can substitute for personal literacy skills. This is not so in some of the other domains. Religious activities, for example, occur only in Spanish. The ESL classroom also tends to make personal literacy skills in one's own language prerequisite. Thus, some domains tend to operate along specific and exclusive language and literacy lines in ways other domains do not.

Alternative Strategies

The people who participated in this study described a range of strategies they use to manage written language in English and Spanish. Many of the same strategies are used in different domains, but there are also distinct differences in the ways these strategies operate (or do not operate) from domain to domain. The strategies I identified include the following categories: scribes or helpers, memory, limited forms of literacy, experimentation, and avoidance.

The home domain often provides its own scribes, translators, and helpers for English and Spanish written language. Often, however, because of stigma as well as tension between family members, those I interviewed are reluctant to always be asking for help. They therefore often come to depend more on their memories, trusted friends, limited literacy abilities, and experimentation. They also often ignore things they cannot personally use, such as written recipes and unfamiliar appliances.

Getting around the city and shopping involve all of the strategies described above. One apparent difference between this domain and others, however, is that scribes and helpers seem to be used less in this domain because the people I interviewed do not always have friends or family available to accompany them. Nevertheless, they often learn by word of

mouth from friends and family how to find a place or about specials that are being advertised. And when limited uses of letters and numbers are not adequate to a situation, many of the individuals have developed other alternatives, such as asking a friend to accompany them, experimenting, preferring to shop in places where print is not essential and where non-print practices are more the norm (ethnic market places, for example), and, as a last resort, asking strangers for directions.

Much like shopping, dealing with offices and bureaucracies often involves the use of memory and limited cues from public or bureaucratic print. The people I interviewed often go to offices unaccompanied after first learning the way. Unlike shopping and "getting around" practices, office literacy practices require the help of others. But offices often tend to unofficially provide the needed scribal services. Perhaps more than any other domain, bureaucracies require the development of an effective network of preferably bilingual helpers because there is no alternative but to deal with paperwork. The people I interviewed come to depend on finding helpful bureaucrats, nurses, and tellers in this domain. But managing paperwork, and learning the format, the important information, and the action required by given pieces of official paper call other strategies into play as well.

The religious domain is not conducive to the use of the range of strategies which can be used in the home and in the city. Either one memorizes the pertinent material, or one remains a silent observer of those practices which involve public or private reading. The embarrassment of not being able to participate, and the stigma of being uneducated encourages one additional strategy--avoidance of public religious activities.

The classroom domain allows even fewer alternative strategies. The strategies non-literates rely on in other domains do not operate in the classroom. Non-literates cannot depend on their network of helpers, for example, in order to meet the demands written language has in that domain. Only oral/aural memory comes to their aid, but most classrooms do not often build on this strategy. Non-literates are therefore often left isolated and without recourse in the classroom. No other setting leaves them so helpless. It is therefore not surprising that they display high levels of anxiety and frustration and often choose to avoid classroom settings.

The workplace domain is characterized by at least two kinds of

literacy requirements--employment literacy and job literacy. Getting work requires a network to help one find a position, take care of the official letters of permission, application forms, and so forth. Once a person finds employment, more strategies can come into play--the use of scribes, memory, and limited kinds of reading and writing. None of those who participated in the study described the kind of helplessness and isolation on the job that they experienced in the classroom.

The use of strategies also relates to how English and Spanish operate in the everyday lives of Hispanos. The non-English-speaking Hispano literate must turn to many of the same strategies used by the non-literate when English literacy is essential and Spanish literacy does not adequately substitute. A Spanish literate who has not learned these other strategies effectively, such as building networks, learning by experimenting, and so forth, would likely become isolated in ways that are characteristic of the local non-literates Fingeret describes. This is one of the ways in which the so-called "effects" of non-literacy become characteristics as well of non-English speaking Hispano literates. The resulting "local" traits would seem to have more to do, then, with the ability to use other strategies than to some generalized form of reading and writing competence.

One important factor which separates the Hispano literate from the Hispano non-literate, however, is the Spanish literate's acquired advantage in the ESL classroom. The contention that mother-tongue literacy leads to success in the ESL classroom must be put forward with caution, however. On the one hand, success in the ESL classroom may have as much to do with socialization into the school domain as with the ability to read and write in Spanish. The classroom tends to cater to those with metalinguistic skills (grammar analysis) as well as other social and cultural practices learned in mainstream schooled social settings. Thus, a non-schooled Hispano, such as Angela, who has achieved literacy outside of a school context feels just as helpless and frustrated in the classroom as do non-literates. On the other hand, success in the ESL classroom is not a function only of the amount of one's schooling either. Many Hispanos with high levels of schooling also do not do well in ESL classrooms. Nevertheless, it seems to be the case that those with more schooling tend to learn English more successfully in ESL classrooms.

The conclusion that appears to emerge, then, is that the inability to

use English reading and writing often places schooled and non-schooled Spanish speakers on a somewhat similar footing when dealing with English reading and writing in such domains as bureaucracies, getting around the city and shopping, and access to the workplace (employability). Non-English-speaking Hispanos with many years of schooling must therefore come to rely on many of the same strategies used by non-literates in non-classroom domains, such as depending on numbers, experimenting, relying on helpers, avoiding English-use situations, and so forth. In the classroom, however, the schooled individual cannot be said to be on the same footing as a non-schooled individual because an individual familiar with classroom practices and schooled uses for language (both written and oral) is not as helpless as a person without such classroom skills.

The extent to which Spanish literacy helps literate Hispanos in English language contexts in comparison to those who cannot themselves read or write much in Spanish is an issue, however, which this investigation did not pursue in detail a because I did not include non-English-speaking Hispanos with many year of schooling in my sample. It would seem that Spanish literates would have a broader range of literacy skills on which to rely--be more able, for example, to use such aids as dictionaries, maps, lists, calendars, telephone guides, and so forth. But I did not make the pursuit of this issue part of the investigation because I did not include individuals with higher than a 4th grade education in my sample.

Functions

Up to this point in this summary, I have focused on practices. The following discussion about functions is a move from the more empirical description of practices to the more subjective dimensions of perceptions and meanings associated with written language. My use of the word functions, as I explained in earlier chapters, operates primarily at the individual and group level of perceptions of the role written language has in people's lives. Only towards the end of the discussion do I come to consider functions at the more societal level (in terms of shared ideology). For the purposes of this study, I have divided the discussion of functions into positive aspects and negative aspects.

Positive Functions

I attempted to explore the positive functions of literacy in the lives of my informants through the notion of uses. The five uses which I

identified are as follows: managing everyday activities, communicating over distance, becoming aware of knowledge, learning (especially English), and getting employment.

The home domain involves most of these uses. The people I interviewed frequently receive and send letters to communicate with people in their home countries. They like to become informed about the news, sales, and occasionally what the instructions say on various products and medications. Family members use books and newspapers to learn English and school subjects. The street and shopping domains, and the overlapping domain of offices, primarily require what I have termed the everyday management uses for literacy--finding one's way around, identifying places and products, keeping appointments, managing household business, and so forth.

The religious domain seems to include two uses for literacy, one which does not appear in other domains (except maybe the classroom)--participating in public, usually audible, forms of reading--and the other which is also central to the classroom--learning for self improvement. The uses for classroom reading and writing specifically serve the one purpose of learning English, as well as more generally for learning knowledge required for employment. In a similar (or overlapping) way, the workplace uses of reading and writing are just that--using reading and writing to get past the employment screens, on the one hand, and for actually doing the job, on the other hand.

The uses people have for literacy also divide somewhat along language lines--English and Spanish. As I mentioned above, reading and writing for managing everyday activities involves a mixture of English and Spanish which is difficult to disentangle because much of the shopping, paying of routine bills, making visits to doctors offices, and using the transit system tend to involve using limited codes that could operate in either Spanish or English. These people are often able to recognize individual letters, numbers, and the format, shape, or colour of a given form of written language without knowing much English. In this way, they operate in a predominantly English speaking context, with varying degrees of success, in Spanish.

The use of reading and writing for communicating over distance, however, operates almost entirely in Spanish. Such communication takes place in English only for occasional notes between schools and the home. Related to the literacy that is used for communicating over distance is

the literacy that is used for becoming informed. Again, Spanish is the preferred language for becoming informed about the news, and English (translated by helpers into Spanish) is the main language for becoming informed about sales and specials in the advertising sections of English newspapers.

The use of reading and writing for learning includes both Spanish and English and applies both to the home and to the schools. Two language related issues arise in connection to the learning use for literacy. First, the people I interviewed tend to see Spanish literacy as essential for learning both oral and written English. They have seen that it is those who know their own written language that progress through the English learning programs in this city. The second issue is that my informants perceive this connection as more one of schooling than of simply reading and writing because the lack they feel is not that of simply coding and decoding ability, but of knowing schooled Spanish, including Spanish grammar. This raises yet another language issue--the fact that the people in my sample perceive the dialect of Spanish they speak to be an inferior language. They feel they must learn standard Spanish first in order to learn English. There is a progression, then, first to learn standard Spanish, including the schooled literacy and grammatical knowledge that comes with schooling, and only then being equipped to learn English. Thus, the use that literacy has for learning is associated with Spanish schooled literacy--a very specific kind of literacy both in terms of the language involved and the kind of skills specific to that domain.

A similar relationship exists between English and Spanish literacy for the purpose of employment. Employability was the primary use people gave for learning to read and write in English. But learning English, my informants believe, depends on Spanish schooled literacy. Only then can the process of credentialling and getting training for employment come into play. It is job literacy, as opposed to employment literacy, which brings a more instrumental form of literacy into play. It tends to require limited forms of English literacy such as knowing menus or recipes or knowing what words appear on labels, boxes, and containers. Spanish can sometimes substitute for English in job uses of literacy and other strategies can come into play to manage the English reading and writing. Thus, even Spanish literacy can have a role (a learning role and an instrumental role) at primarily English language work sites.

The uses that people who participated in this study have for reading and writing, then, involve both Spanish and English forms of literacy, but in a number of ways. In many cases, Spanish is the language used and cannot be substituted for English (e.g., correspondence and church). Occasionally, however, English and Spanish substitute or overlap (getting around, shopping). In other situations, English is the only language which can be used (application forms, limited repertoire of job-specific English reading and writing). One of the more important relationships between Spanish and English reading and writing, however, particularly in terms of the learning use for literacy, is the link between Spanish schooled literacy and learning English (both oral and written).

Negative Functions

The inadequacy and exclusion people feel due to non-literacy also varies from domain to domain. In the household domain, they expressed inadequacy at the management of everyday business. Some of them also expressed the sense of exclusion from their children's school life and the related stigma of being considered ignorant and uncultured. This in turn has a bearing on which family members are seen to be helpful.

Many of these feelings of inefficiency and stigma carry over into the streets and shops, where a non-literate Hispano sees others get around, shop, and do their business in a way they perceive to be more efficient than their own ways of accomplishing the same tasks. They feel that people who can read the signs or make lists accomplish such tasks directly and without effort whereas they must experiment, guess, ask for help, taste and smell, and cope with forgetting things. They are also embarrassed by their children's embarrassment of them in public places, and often seem to prefer to go into the city on their own rather than suffer the stigma cast on them by family members.

Negative associations that my informants tended to make about the reading and writing they encountered in offices includes perceptions, not only about the inconvenience, but also the embarrassment, of having to ask nurses, tellers, or immigration counsellors to fill in forms for them. This helps explain why they prefer to be served by the same person each time because the person will already know their situation, and save them the trouble of revealing all over again their need for help.

During the interviews I conducted, the theme of exclusion did not often arise in terms of the office domain. Bureaucracies bring frustration, require patience and time, and produce feelings of

helplessness, but in the end, these environments are managed. The theme of exclusion, in relation to the offices people must visit, did come up in conversations about acquiring legal status in this country, but the fear of expulsion at the whim of the government reflects a sense of helplessness that has little to do with whether or not one can read and write.

The religious domain also includes feelings both of inadequacy and of exclusion. A good memory does not adequately equip one to participate in many of the religious activities of a church service. Non-literacy in effect results in exclusion from full participation in many worship practices, both public and private. A distinctive feature of this domain is that Latin American cultural and class differences are not leveled by English requirements and legal status as they are in the labour market and in government bureaucracies. As a result, class differences between the Hispanos that would exist in Latin America come to be felt in this Spanish language context in a way that they are not felt in other domains. This discrimination increases the desire of low-education Hispanos to be able to both read and speak standard Spanish. Consequently, the public nature of many religious activities can make church a difficult domain to face.

The classroom excludes Hispano non-literates more than any other domain. Most of those I talked to described either attending and then leaving an ESL program in frustration, or staying, session after session, at the basic beginner level. The issue, therefore, is not only feeling less efficient than literates in terms of managing the tasks associated with the domains, but, in a more basic way, being unable to engage <u>at all</u> in those tasks. The stigma of not knowing one's own language properly, let alone being unable to read and write, plays a part in the kinds of negative associations the people I interviewed attach to classroom literacy practices.

And the domain of work once again relates to English and schooling. The chain of associations begins with the stigma of not being schooled properly in one's own language and therefore not possessing the adequate skills and strategies for progressing towards good employment. The feeling of exclusion has to do with the sense many have that they are good workers and can do the work, but they are blocked by artificially high language, literacy, and schooling requirements.

Feelings of inadequacy and exclusion also divide somewhat along

language lines. The sense of inadequacy due to Spanish non-literacy relates, as we have seen, both to the stigma of lacking culture and to the feeling of having to do things inefficiently compared to a Spanish literate who has more resources for managing English-language print contexts. A non-English-speaking hispanic literate uses English text in ways a non-literate cannot (ability to use dictionaries to translate, and to read more public print). But, at the same time, the people I interviewed also recognize the way in which the lack of English proficiency results in a form of levelling which often places all non-English-speaking people on the same footing in English-use domains. Exclusion operates for both literate and non-literate and schooled and non-schooled Hispanos in predominantly English domains because of a lack of oral and written English language proficiency. Many non-English speakers, for example, regardless of education, find themselves in low level menial jobs, having to use various strategies to manage. Only when it comes to the English learning, job training, and job finding progression, it seems, does this exclusion begin to work differently for a schooled Hispano than for a low-education Hispano.

Ideology

As I explained in both chapter 1 and chapter 5, recent literature tends to focus on the ideological component of literacy. The contention is that literacy's role in society is largely bound up with the ideological context in which literacy practices take place. In other words, literacy functions for an individual, a group, and a society largely in terms of the shared meanings attached to written materials and "literacy events" in given social settings. The data from this investigation is not extensive enough to provide a detailed outline of the ideological dimensions of literacy in the everyday lives of the people I interviewed, but the discussion above of negative and positive functions of literacy has provided many clues. A number of other more general ideological features should also be mentioned, however.

In the household, the importance of schooling, the inferiority of non-standard Spanish and its relation to lack of schooling, contributes to the kinds of relationships which emerge between family members. Those who are non-schooled tend to build much of their everyday lives around supporting the schooling efforts of their children and spouses, an orientation based on an ideology which places a high value on schooling. This value, however, results in placing the non-schooled in inferior

roles, and contributes to beliefs about the inadequacy, ignorance, and inferiority of the non-literate person. The stigma and the related embarrassment, shared by family members and the non-schooled individual, suggests that these beliefs about inferiority are internalized.

The literacy demands from other domains also come into the household because of the way other domains converge in the household through the media, the bureaucratic forms and notices which arrive by mail, the schoolwork and relationship of the children and the parents to the schools, and the social realities of kinds of employment, and of legal status. It is clear, then, that the values attached to schooling and to the related reading and writing skills (or lack of them) contribute in important ways to the structuring of roles and practices in the household domain.

The domains outside of the house--getting around the city, shopping, and doing other forms of daily business--also possess an ideological component. But in these domains, the ideological tensions appear to be less out in the open. A non-literate can "pass" and therefore often avoid the stigma in the shops and streets. But the omnipresent public print, and the central place paperwork takes in the offices, hospitals, and banks continue to structure this domain along lines of the inadequacy felt by the non-literate. And the embarrassment felt by the children is carried over into the streets and shops because they do not like to be embarrassed in public due to the inadequacies of their non-literate parent. This helps to explain why those I interviewed often like to go into the city unaccompanied--both to avoid dependence, and the embarrassment of their children.

The religious domain is also structured in many ways around the ideology of schooled literacy. Those who can read and write are best equipped for participation in public worship. The public nature of church results in social interaction structured in part around the status of individuals, those with less schooling and "culture" avoiding church or hoping to "pass" by remaining silent and unobtrusive.

The classroom and work domains are also explicitly structured around an ideology of schooling. Classroom success for English learning and job related training, is perceived to relate directly to previous schooling. And exclusion from higher level ESL classes and better employment confirms this perception. There is a difference between the classroom domain and the work domain, however. In the eyes of those I interviewed,

lack of schooling renders one inadequate in the enterprise of learning English. But feelings of inadequacy do not carry over to the work domain. Lack of schooling serves to exclude one from opportunity to get employment, but it does not render one an inadequate worker. Most of those I interviewed have no doubts about their ability to do good work.

There is also a language component to this ideological dimension of literacy. The English-speaking mainstream ideology of schooling, although it overlaps with its Latin American counterpart, does not match it. There seems to be a specifically Latin American ideology connecting schooling to civilization and culture and lack of schooling to the non-civilized, less than human condition of the non-Spanish (Indian, black).

There appears to be another ideological difference between the mainstream Canadian understanding and the low-education Hispano's perceptions on what schooled literacy equips people for in society. It has to do with the Hispano's more personal and networking approach to relating to employers, government agents, social workers, and so forth, as opposed to the urban English-speaking culture's emphasis on the independent individual equipped to operate on his/her own. These two overlapping yet distinct perspectives reinforce each other at points, and clash at other points. But these two perspectives seem to come together in the experience of low-education Hispanos in that they internalize both the stigma of inferiority in relation to Spanish culture and the inferiority due to their inability to operate as independent, self-made individuals as Canadian society suggests they should.

Conclusion on Findings

To conclude this summary of my findings, then, the results of this study suggest that language-use realities contain many levels and variables which mix and flow into each other in different configurations in the various domains of everyday life. One of the main themes which emerges is the variety of kinds of literacy which operate in different domains, once again raising the need to talk of many literacies rather than of one literacy. And this variety includes both Spanish and English forms of literacy which sometimes play similar roles and allow substitution, but which other times serve separate roles. Another part of the language-use reality is the strategies non-literate people use to deal with the reading and writing desires and demands which occur in their everyday lives. These strategies operate better in some domains

than in others. Again, both Spanish and English have specific roles in the way these strategies operate.

An ideological component permeates these practices associated with written language. Both positive and negative associations give meaning to these practices. Both Canadian and Latin American mainstream ideological systems help to create the meanings (and the clash of meanings) which come to structure the role written language and written language practices take in the various dimensions of a low-education Hispano's everyday life.

These findings emphasize, then, the complexity of language-use realities, the ideological component which helps structure those realities, the fact that different kinds of literacies have important roles in those realities, and that these roles include both Spanish and English varieties of reading and writing. I will now turn to a discussion of the implications raised by these findings. **IMPLICATIONS**

This investigation has been based on a sociolinguistic perspective, and the implications which arise out of the study largely stem from the sociolinguistic nature of the approach. As we have seen, Hymes defines this perspective in terms of language functions. The implication for education in general, according to Hymes (1980), is that questions of pedagogy "must be decided in favor of an emphasis on function as primary, form as instrumental" (p. 113). One of the main principles of a sociolinguistic approach, however, is that language functions, or the roles different kinds of language practices play in given social settings, cannot be postulated in isolation from the social settings in question. They must be discovered on site.

The sociolinguistic approach, therefore, depends on an ethnographic methodology, a methodology which seeks to discover within a specific social setting the socially constructed patterns and relationships which help to structure that setting. The implications of this study also arise, then, out of the nature of an ethnographic methodology. This discussion of implications will therefore be based on issues which are central to a sociolinguistic and ethnographic perspective, such as the emphasis on discovering rather than pre-hypothesizing the various levels of dynamics within a society, the description of local language-use details, the ideological component of social settings, and the problem of generalizability.

Reconceptualizing the Problem

One of the primary features of an ethnographic approach is its emphasis on discovering rather than pre-hypothesizing the nature of the phenomenon or problem in question. This has implications, as Smith (1980) suggests, not only in terms of what might comprise reasonable elements for a solution, but also for the way in which problems and their causes come to be defined (p. 263). The implications suggested by an ethnographic perspective, therefore, involve not only talk about solutions, but also talk about what constitutes the problem.

Smith points out that an ethnographic approach does not start from pre-defined problems. It starts by describing the dynamics of a given social context and then seeks to define the problem and its cause in terms of the shared meanings as well as in terms of the social, economic, and cultural patterns and relationships found in that setting. Thus, the nature of the problem itself comes into question. Smith points out, for example, that non-literacy is not necessarily a social malady in societies where non-literacy is not stigmatized. Societies have existed, and still do exist, which treat literacy as the specialized skill of one more profession rather than as a general prerequisite for participation in that society. Comparative studies, for example, suggest that many societies in which literacy has existed have not required all individuals to possess literacy skills. Although some societies preserve literacy as a form of power for the elite, other societies provide access to use of written language through scribes. As Burnaby and MacKenzie (1985), and Scribner and Cole (1981a) explain, the Cree and the Vai have individuals in their kinship or social networks who can provide for the literacy needs of other individuals.

Even in societies which make literacy skills prerequisite, ethnographic studies have demonstrated that non-literacy is often not the social malady it is made out to be, but rather the symptom of deeper social problems. Smith cites Ogbu (1974), whose study I mentioned in chapter 5. He suggests that one form of literacy problem, school failure, is more the symptom than the cause for the exclusion of subordinate minorities from economic benefits. High rates of school failure among subordinate minorities in the United States, according to Ogbu, is the reasonable response to the fact that members of subordinate minorities who acquire higher levels of education do not on the whole find better paying employment than lesser educated members of those same groups. To explain this problem only in terms of a minority group's

alleged technological, cultural, or intellectual deficiencies is to ignore social, economic, and cultural realities that help structure a given social setting against minorities. Smith argues that, as long as the problem comes to be defined as an educational problem where members of minority groups need to be changed, questions will not be raised about dominant shared social myths, and the attached social inequalities and practices of exclusion in the social and economic structure of a society. He concludes that the causes of non-literacy are "multiple, frequently results or symptoms of social and economic exclusion, rather than themselves the causes of exclusion" (p. 274).

In this same way, the findings in this study suggest the need to reconceptualize what the educational needs of low-education minority-language groups are, particularly in terms of everyday mother-tongue and English literacy realities. The fact that ESL programs comprise the only adult basic education option for low-education minority groups demonstrates that mother-tongue literacy needs are rarely considered to be of "basic" concern. As long as English proficiency is assumed to be the primary learning need upon which all other "basic" or "functional" learning needs rest, decision makers will fail to consider a range of feasible training options which are more in tune with actual language use realities in the everyday lives of low-education minority-language adults. Some of these options will be suggested in the next section.

It would be ludicrous, of course, to suggest that English proficiency does not constitute a need in Toronto. That is not the point. What my findings demonstrate, however, is that it is quite possible for low-education Hispanos to "function" or operate proficiently in many of the everyday domains of life in Toronto without English oral or written proficiency. The problem does not relate as much to the ability to manage everyday activities as it does to dealing with the socially constructed stigma, exclusion from English language learning opportunities, and exclusion from good employment. Such exclusion likely has more to do with problems in the way ESL courses are structured and the way job hiring practices occur than in the deficiencies of low-education minority-language adults in terms of work skills and/or the ability to learn the job English or job literacy required by many jobs.

The implication here, however, is not simply to point out that traditional formal ESL programs and job hiring practices are structured

against low-education minority-language adults. The point is that an ethnographic perspective, which requires one to look at specific local settings and discover the way in which problems are structured in specific situations, often results in the need to reconceptualize what constitutes the problem in a specific setting or case. This leads, as Smith observes, to new insights about possible ways to resolve the problem (p. 271).

Reconceptualizing Solutions

An approach which focuses on discovering the ways in which individuals use written language in their everyday lives provides a wealth of specific information about not only what people do and do not want (or need) to learn but also about ways in which they will and will not likely learn. Descriptions of real language-use situations provide such insights, some of which suggest improvements to existing adult education programs, and others which suggest more radical changes. I will first suggest some of the more conventional possibilities.

Reading and Writing Practices

Ethnography provides a wealth of information useful for the discovery of needs, the setting of objectives, and the planning of curriculum. Hymes wonders why educators have not turned to this tool more often. He writes, in reference to the education of children, "Most educators would agree with the principle that teaching should start where the child is. Few appear to recognize that to do so requires knowledge of the community from which the child comes" (p. 106). This applies as well to the education of adults. It seems essential to discover not only what students desire and are required to accomplish in everyday language-use situations, but also what skills and aptitudes the individuals already possess on which to base further learning. The fact that low-education Hispanos find existing ESL programs counterproductive for the purpose of language learning suggests that neither the everyday needs nor the existing base of skills and learning orientations of low-education minority-language individuals is well understood by ESL planners and instructors.

In this same vein, Scribner and Cole (1981b) remark that institutionalized learning programs have often "failed to tap the wide range of 'indigenous' interests and practices which confer significance on writing" because such programs tend to focus on the very limited mode of academic writing (p. 85). It seems that the ways in which

minority-language adults actually use, and desire to use, reading and writing should be obvious starting points for needs assessment for the learning programs created for them.

This "functional" approach to the design of ESL and adult basic education programs is particularly important given Scribner and Cole's (1981a) demonstration that literacy does not represent a generalized and transferable set of cognitive skills, but a wide range of practice-specific skills which arise out of specific social settings and which are organized in culturally patterned ways. The everyday uses of written language involves what could be called (using Hymes' sociolinguistic terminology) a "repertoire" of different literacies. And, as the findings of this study demonstrate, this repertoire for low-education Hispanos includes both Spanish and English "literacies."

My findings, however, do not simply suggest that a Spanish literacy component should be added to existing basic beginner ESL courses. My findings suggest a complex language-use reality which calls for the reconceptualization of basic educational needs of low-education Hispanos. ESL programs, for example, are beginning to provide what is being called ESL literacy. This designation for a specific facet of ESL is poorly conceived because it lumps a wide variety of English reading and writing varieties, skills, practices, levels, and purposes together as if they were one generalized competency. As Burnaby and Bell (1987) point out, ESL literacy covers a wide range of reading and writing needs for many different kinds of students--from highly literate and schooled non-English-speaking individuals who merely have not yet learned the roman script (such as literates schooled in Hebrew, Arabic, Japanese, Chinese, and so forth) to Southeast Asian tribal people who, in their culture, have never possessed a written language, let alone had previous schooling opportunities. In between these extremes fall many categories, from mother-tongue non-literates who nevertheless come from literate societies (such as Spanish or Portuguese non-literates) to those who can read and/or write some things with difficulty in their own language, yet have had little formal schooling, to individuals with many years of formal schooling, but who have a history of school failure.

These are different kinds of literacy problems in just one domain--the ESL classroom. Other domains present their own configurations of requirements in terms of English literacy needs that English speaking and non-English speaking non-literates and semi-literates face. Smith (1986)

points out that a mechanic who depends on his employees for help reading a repair manual, the plight of southeast Asian immigrants, public school students who do not like to read, and minority group recruits in banks finding themselves unable to advance out of entry level positions do not all have the same kind of literacy needs. Smith states,

> Each of these represent qualitatively different phenomena that call for radically different understandings and solutions. This claim is based on the assumption that illiteracy is not simply a single problem taking on various forms in different contexts, but a social issue defined and valenced by social context. (p. 266-67)

Thus, ESL literacy places under its umbrella literacy problems that extend from adult basic education issues all the way to "other script" problems faced by non-English-speaking university students. A much clearer form of literacy needs assessment and evaluation is required not only for existing ESL programs, but also for providing learning situations to meet these various needs in English, and for providing referral mechanisms to properly place non-literate students into programs which will help them.

In addition, however, as my findings suggest, ESL literacy is not the only kind of literacy need that low-education Hispanos have. There are kinds of literacy in Spanish which would also help them manage better in a variety of domains, one of which, it seems, is the English classroom. In the same way that there are different kinds of English literacy practices and needs, there are also a variety of Spanish literacy practices and needs. The kind of Spanish literacy skills used for getting around the city, making lists, using English telephone books, and so forth, is of a different order than the Spanish literacy needed for church services or for reading a Spanish newspaper, and different yet again from the kind of Spanish literacy needed for ESL purposes.

One issue is the difference between instrumental uses for managing everyday life as opposed to academic uses (including everything from principles of inflection and alphabetization to spelling rules and composition conventions). Another important issue, however, is the difference between a low-education Hispano dialect of Spanish and standard schooled Spanish. Different literacy uses can require not only different kinds of literacy, but also different kinds of Spanish, and can include the issue of learning, not only written Spanish, but also standard <u>oral</u> Spanish. Standard Spanish may be as removed from the everyday language-use reality of a low-education Hispano as classroom

English.

There is yet another side to the issue of English and Spanish literacy needs. I have up until this point emphasized the range of separate literacy skills and practices, including the different languages and literacies involved. My findings suggest, however, that literacies are not entirely distinct or mutually exclusive categories. A variety of relationships exist both between the different kinds of reading and writing and between the different languages.

One such relationship is the overlap between distinct literacies and languages. The fact that there is overlap suggests that skill transfer must continue to be part of the way literacy is talked about. There has been some research done in the area of reading skills transfer which focuses on why proficient first language readers do not tend to transfer important reading comprehension skills which they use in their first language to their second language reading behaviour (see, for example, McLeod and McLaughlin, 1986). Such research focuses, however, on the reason why certain kinds of reading skills are not transferred to second language reading tasks by proficient first language readers which is a somewhat different issue from the kinds of skills which do transfer and which a first language non-reader would not have. My findings suggest, for example, that some forms of Spanish literacy permit an Hispano to use the writing found in predominantly English language contexts because of similar alphabets and a large number of English/Spanish cognates.

Overlap is not the only link that exists between different kinds of literacies and languages, however. There is also the issue of progression. Spanish schooled literacy, for example, provides school-based learning skills which are essential for successfully learning English (both written and oral) through formal classroom situations. Earlier I cited studies which found that schooled adults on the whole learn English more successfully than non-schooled adults. This is not to suggest that English reading, writing, and oral skills cannot be learned without formal schooling in one's own language, but it is in effect a tacit prerequisite in many of the present systems of ESL instruction.

What the discussion above demonstrates, then, is that details about kinds of everyday literacy practices can provide information, not only about the range of different kinds of literacies which should be included in literacy curriculum for adults, but also about some of the important

relationships which exist between those literacies--what overlaps, substitutes, and transfers, and what does not, and what progressions may exist.

Strategies

The details about the everyday uses of written language in this study were not limited to kinds of reading and writing practices, however. The data also provides useful information about other strategies low-education Hispanos use to manage written language in the various domains which they encounter. These strategies provide insight for alternative ways of conceptualizing the basic educational needs of low-education minority-language adults as well as alternative ways of providing for those needs. Concepts of basic educational needs should be altered, my findings suggest, from narrow categories of personal possession of second language and literacy competence to a broader range of strategies which will help a low-education minority-language adult manage better in various domains.

A program with this approach to basic needs could involve helping low-education Hispanos, for example, acquire a range of strategies, from developing a larger repertoire of limited forms of literacy and numeracy in English and Spanish to developing more effective and reliable access to English and Spanish scribes. Newly arrived low-education Latin American immigrants, it would seem, could be better served, for example, by being provided with a repertoire of strategies for getting around Toronto, such as counting subway stops, recognizing numbers and letters on bus signs, and recognizing landmarks and colours on maps than in attending ESL programs in which they learn little more than a sense of cultural and social inferiority and a sense of classroom inadequacy.

This topic of strategies contains another important implication as well. The fact that many non-literates already employ such strategies to manage the various domains suggests strengths that should be built on in the learning opportunities provided for them. If low-education Hispanos manage by using networks of helpers, by using their memories, by experimenting, and by using limited forms of literacy, these strategies should be integrated into the ways in which learning is provided for them.

Various authors use a comparative perspective to make a similar point. Scribner and Cole (1981a), and Burnaby and MacKenzie (1985) describe that non-formal approaches to literacy learning used by the Vai and the Cree.

This learning approach involves a non-literate receiving hands on instruction from a literate who is in their own social group. Heath (1980) and Smith (1986) both refer to Walker's (1981) study of the Cherokee in which he describes how Cherokee adults who desire to become literate do so through a learning process which involves observing other literates read and write and practicing on their own for some time before trying their skills in front of others. Thus, there is a long period of pre-learning which occurs in everyday domains by observation and private practice. In this way, the embarrassment and loss of face in public classroom situations is avoided.

Weinstein (1984) discusses a similar issue in terms of second language learning. As I explained in chapter 1, she uses Krashen's second language learning model (which suggests the need for comprehensible input in natural language-use situations) to show that formal language classrooms do not provide for the language learning styles of Hmong adult non-literates. Similarly, Fingeret (1983) suggests that networking strategies used by non-literates could be used effectively in literacy programs. She points out that most literacy programs require non-literates to separate themselves from their communities, which serves to remove them from the network members and strategies they have come to depend on, and to alienate them from the subculture conventions which are part of their daily lives. Thus, Fingeret suggests, "Program models must expand to embrace illiterate adults as individuals-in-networks." She goes on to say that "existing social groups will continue to be of primary importance in the lives of illiterate adults" which suggests that "we must explore program and instructional designs that incorporate an appreciation of networks as sources of strength rather than interference" (p. 144). In sum, then, such studies provide insights not only into how learning needs should be open to redefinition but also into how approaches to learning should be expanded to include alternative non-formal methods.

Levine (1986) proposes a more radical approach which reconceptualizes the issue of basic needs of low-education adults. His approach arises out of his discussion about the need to redefine in functional terms what constitutes literacy and non-literacy. What literacy essentially entails for its users, according to Levine, is access to, and exchange of, "relevant" information. Levine would argue, therefore, that what is more important than whether people personally have the skills to read and

write or not is whether they can exchange and gain access to relevant and important information. This issue, he would argue, is more political than it is educational. Thus, he writes

> The social and political significance of literacy . . . derives largely from its role in creating and reproducing--or failing to reproduce--the social distribution of knowledge. If this were not so, if literacy lacked this function, the inability to read would be a shortcoming on a par with tone deafness. (p. 456)

A problem inherent in this redefinition of literacy is that it begins to expand the definition of literacy beyond issues of written language, and of reading and writing skills, to issues of communication exchange in general. It is perhaps better applied to definitions of adult basic education in general than to literacy in particular because it relates to basic functional needs which encompass more than reading and writing practices. But Levine's redefinition of literacy has important implications for a functional conception of literacy, for what constitutes use-oriented competence with a given form of literacy. People who cannot (or do not) themselves do the reading and writing, but who nevertheless get access to the information and knowledge they need and want would be considered literate in Levine's scheme. The same criteria applies in the opposite direction. Writers and producers of public information who do not make critical information accessible to the people who need or desire it should also be labelled as lacking literate competence in that context. This approach relates literacy, then, to ways in which reading and writing operate in social contexts to give or withhold access to information.

Based on this view of literacy, Levine suggests an approach which would provide for many of the information needs of non-literates in modern urban societies in a way that does not assume they must personally learn to read and write. He suggests drop-in centres which, in addition to providing opportunities to learn reading and writing skills, would also provide scribal services and information services. This system would ensure that information consumers would have access to information they need and want and would also inform producers of public information how to provide information that is accessible to the people who need and want it. He describes such a service as follows:

> A drop-in centre can combine the functions of an advice bureau, a specialized library and a literacy centre. It can provide letter-writing and form-filling and interpretation services for individuals in the community embroiled in correspondence with bureaucracies, and provide a setting for advice clinics . . . .

> Drop-in centres would be able to supply print-handling skills for individuals reluctant to embark on full-scale tuition, but staff would be able to recruit for tuition in those cases where it appeared appropriate. (p. 181)

This approach is not unrealistic. Such a model, in a manner of speaking, is already in operation in Toronto, although in an unofficial way. Many immigrant services centres, immigration offices, and ESL classes already informally provide these services to many non-English-speaking newcomers because they go to individual counsellors, community service personnel, and ESL teachers for this kind of help (translation, reading and writing, and requests for help getting access to various kinds of information). These unofficial services aid low-education adults to better manage the everyday literacy needs they encounter in this city.

Language and Literacy Myths

I began this section on implications by referring to the importance of the notion of language functions in the sociolinguistic perspective I use in this study. Up to this point in this chapter, however, I have emphasized only the empirical side of the issue of functions--the language practices which can be observed to take place in people's everyday lives. Understandings, values, or beliefs about language and language practices form the subjective side of functions. Smith (1986) writes that this subjective component of social settings contributes in an important way to the reconceptualization of social problems which is characteristic of an ethnographic approach because, rather than locating an educational problem in the individual "who needs to be changed" by becoming more skilled, it "seeks the explanation for behaviour in the sets of understandings unconsciously shared by members of a society or social group" (p. 264).

One of the primary implications of this sociolinguistic perspective in general is that language and literacy functions are not merely a set of skills, or practices. Functions also have a "shared meanings" component. Planners of functionally oriented literacy and language learning programs, however, often tend to perceive the needs of students merely in terms of deficiencies of specific sets of skills. Such an approach treats literacy as a purely technological matter and fails to address the fact that functions are much more than practices and skills. They also include the webs of meanings--both positive and negative--which help structure people's ways of interacting with and using language in the social settings in which they live. Thus, program planners and

instructors who perceive students' functional needs from an exclusively technological point of view misunderstand the notion of language functions. Those who make policy decisions about educational programs for low-education minority-language groups need to face this subjective dimension of both the positive and negative functions of literacy in people's lives.

This subjective or ideological component of literacy has particularly important implications for multilingual settings because different languages come to take on separate functions. People attach values, beliefs, and loyalties to languages which influence not only the way languages are used, but also the way second languages are learned. Different groups will have different language loyalties and different beliefs about the roles of languages in given settings. This has both political and pedagogical implications. Fishman (1979) discusses some of the political implications--the loyalties and identities languages engender, and the strategies used by many expanding national governments to enforce assimilation by attempting to change language identities and loyalties. In a similar way, Kelman (1979) points out that languages can involve sentimental and/or instrumental attachments both of which become matters of political importance particularly in countries dominated by nation building and modernization ideologies (p. 23). Educational policy makers must contend with these pragmatic, sentimental, and identity-related features of language which influence people's attachments to them. The associations people attach to various languages include not only beliefs about what literacy in a particular language will accomplish for them, but also the senses of inadequacy, stigma, and exclusion which they associate with given languages or forms of literacy.

Various pedagogical implications follow. Regardless of policy makers' and program planners' social agendas, a target population's language values, loyalties, and notions about uses for language will influence the kind of learning in which they will engage. Stubbs (1980) emphasizes that what a given group of people believes about language and language uses matters because people will be pre-disposed to pursue learning goals they perceive to be important. In a similar way, Shaw writes that "the societal role of literacy in [a given] language, as well as the language attitudes of the learners, will greatly determine the eagerness and determination with which the learners will approach the learning task" (p. 137).

This issue of relevance takes on particular importance in the case of low-education adults because they are very likely to experience failure in formal educational settings and are therefore unlikely to participate on an ongoing basis in adult basic education programs unless they find good reason to attend. It is therefore important to understand their world of meaning, to start learning programs that are relevant to them, because, as Szwed (1981) argues, learning motivation is tied to a person's perception of the functions of written language (p. 15).

There is more to the issue of curriculum relevance, however, than being sensitive to the mind sets of people who have fragile formal learning constitutions in order to help them learn. There are deeper issues involved. Shaw (1983) points out in terms of making language decisions that at least three sets of factors must be reconciled in multilingual situations: 1) the objective language-use realities of a given situation, 2) a minority group's way of perceiving that reality, and 3) the dominant group's way of perceiving that reality. I have focused up to this point primarily on the first two. Dominant groups possess language and literacy myths of their own, however. Coming to terms with the dominant group's ideologies of literacy and language raises, once again, the issue of ideological hegemony.

A dominant culture, then, possesses its own ideology of literacy. Burnaby (1985) emphasizes this point to argue that Native language literacy in Canada should not be compared negatively to the dominant culture literacy because Native language literacy has its own unique functional characteristics. Burnaby points out that the "heavy functional load" under which mainstream literacy labours in both the French and English dominant cultures differs from the way in which literacy operates in Native communities. Native literacy should not be seen, she maintains, in terms of inadequacies in relation to the superstandard of dominant culture literacy; rather, it should be seen in its own right, in terms of the set of uses and needs it serves Native speakers in Native communities (pp. xiii-xv).

I would argue that mainstream Canadian literacy also seems to be characterized by the links members of the dominant culture make between literacy and social change in what could be called a modernization and development ideology. Graff (1986) maintains that most current discussions about literacy take for granted this kind of "modernization" ideology by linking literacy to economic, political, technological, and

cultural progress and development. Literacy, like education in general, is believed to play a major role in transforming the economic, political, and cultural characteristics of a society. Graff calls these beliefs a myth, not because they do not have any truth in reality, but because they tend to form a central part of the belief system which influences the practices of the decision makers and policy implementers in the dominant culture.

Languages also come to have similar myths attached to them. Fishman (1979), for example, discusses how governments tend to perceive language differences as obstacles to political consolidation, and economic and social progress in multilingual countries in part because different language identities reflect local and traditional loyalties as opposed to national, progressive loyalties. Forces of language standardization, group assimilation, national authentification, and modernization are significant components of dominant group hegemony which is often based on a modernization ideology that emphasizes language (and cultural) homogeneity. Hymes (1980) also comments on this push for language homogenization in North America. Mainstream groups, he says, often tend to be frightened of language diversity as if language in itself creates divisions when, in fact, such divisions would exist even if everyone spoke the same language (p. 146). A language homogenization stance, in Graff's terminology, would be another part of the modernization myth, which, regardless of its veracity, forms part of the belief system held by many members of Canadian mainstream society.

A dominant group, then, operates on the basis of its own shared myths about literacy, language, and educational change. Policy makers, program planners, and instructors cannot escape the fact that learning objectives, classroom practices, kinds of learning, and consequences of learning (whether acquisition of skills and knowledge, or the reinforcement of stigma) all operate within these ideological realities.

Members of minority-language groups must also come to terms both with their own myths and with the dominant culture myths. I suggested earlier, for example, that mainstream English-speaking Canadian understandings of literacy and schooling overlap in some ways with, and differ in other ways from, the low-education Hispano's ideology of schooling. What people believe to be pragmatic and functional is compounded in a minority-language situation where issues of language identity, assimilation pressures, and social realities also enter into

the situation. The low-education Hispano must deal with these ideological differences, either accepting and accommodating to them or rejecting and resisting them. Various authors (e.g., Rockhill, Graff, Ogbu) have demonstrated, as I explained in chapter 5, that people's responses often tend to be mediated by perceptions and explanations of everyday reality which reflect blurred, contradictory understandings of the social, cultural, and language realities which operate below the surface.

An important pedagogical implication arises from this clash, overlap, and blurred understanding of dominant and minority-culture ideologies. It involves addressing those features both of the dominant culture and of the minority-culture ideologies which plainly contradict social and language-use realities. The need to raise people's awareness (whether policy makers, planners, instructors, the public, or members of minority groups) of such contradictions is a pedagogical issue.

A number of authors include this issue of coming to terms with myths as a component of the kinds of programs they recommend. The social transformation approach popularized by Paulo Freire (1970) provides one of the best known approaches of this type. Although, as I pointed out in chapter 1, Freire does not address the minority-language issue central to multilingual contexts, he squarely confronts the issue of the ideological and political nature of adult basic education for subordinated groups. Freire develops an entire pedagogical philosophy using adult literacy learning as his primary example. He argues for the need to blend the teacher's role and the student's role into one common process of learning so that in an almost ethnographic sense the teacher comes to learn with a group of students how the group's reality is constructed. The process first requires learning the people's ways of perceiving and speaking, and then helping them to become critically aware of how those perceptions match social realities. According to Freire, every social setting must be learned anew because what the people believe and understand makes up an important part of the social realities which have contributed to the relations of domination, exclusion, and privilege and which are shrouded over with what he calls false consciousness. This knowledge can be arrived at only from within the situation. The learning cannot be prescribed from outside.

Although Shaw (1983) provides a less phenomenological approach, he deals with some of the same issues, but specifically in terms of making

language decisions for adult literacy programs. He develops a model which depends on "negotiation" between educational planners/decision makers and a target minority-language group. He portrays both sides as having a kind of essential knowledge of which the other side is ignorant. The planners and decision makers, according to Shaw, "need to hear first hand about the illiterate's view of the value of literacy and how sh/he sees it fitting into his/her life." They need to know how the illiterate feels

> . . . about such issues as assimilation, ethnic and language maintenance, and development. They need to assess how people actually feel about literacy in a certain language and to identify the spheres of life in which learners would utilize such skills. (p. 223)

But, on the other hand, the prospective literacy learners need to hear from those who are developing the programs a realistic appraisal of what roles different kinds of literacy can play for them and how much time and effort a given kind of literacy in a given language will take to learn. In this way, each side, according to Shaw, can help cure the other side of its ignorance.

Shaw also argues, however, that both sides must become reconciled to the "functional roles of the languages in specific contexts" (p. 222). A dominant language takes on economic and political roles which a minority group must face, but a minority language also has specific roles in a minority group's everyday activities regardless of what official language policies or dominant group ideologies say should be the case.

In summary, then, I have argued that literacy and language are ideological matters. Myths about them operate as a force for structuring social, cultural, and economic relations between groups and individuals. At least three overlapping components enter into this ideological complexity: 1) the dominant group system of language and literacy beliefs and interests, 2) the minority group system of language and literacy beliefs and interests, and 3) the objective political, social, and sociolinguistic reality in which dominant and minority groups co-exist. The ethnographic approach taken in this study suggests both political and pedagogical implications for educational policy makers and practitioners which stem from this ideological component of language and literacy.

Non-Generalizability of Findings

One important, overarching implication which, in a sense, emerges as the primary conclusion to this study in relation to the language-use

practices and associated myths discussed above is that generalized solutions are inappropriate. Shaw (1983) comes to this same conclusion. Referring specifically to variation found between individuals in adult basic literacy programs, Shaw concludes that literacy programs must show flexibility in adapting to the needs of their clientele (with reference to attracting and holding learners). He states that "this will probably mean a variety of programs using a variety of languages. No single approach or single language policy is likely to be effective for all illiterates" (p. 221). Hymes (1980) makes the same point in his discussion of ethnography as a form of education research. He states,

> The ultimate result of ethnography, of course, may be radical. It may suggest that some desired outcomes are impossible, given what the society is willing to spend on schooling . . . . By making particular situations palpable, credible, a living part of the imagination, ethnographic accounts may make it more difficult to impose uniform general solutions that are arbitrary in local settings. When some charge that ethnography does not permit generalization, they may be shrewder than they know. (p. xii)

Clearly, then, simple solutions such as the provision of basic beginner ESL programs for all minority-language groups, let alone all forms of literacy needs within those groups, provide overly generalized approaches to the basic education needs of minority-language groups. A larger variety of programs, including literacy learning opportunities in several languages, would seem to be a solution more in tune with the language- and literacy-use realities of the everyday lives of minority-language groups. But simply providing more kinds of opportunities in various languages by itself is not the answer. Adult basic education programs must be geared towards discovering actual language-use practices and strategies of the various minority groups. They should also be open to non-educational solutions to the basic needs of minority groups. Clearly, however, these recommendations, and the recommendations of others cited earlier, are not well fleshed out. More research of an ethnographic sort is required to fill in the details.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Because this investigation is exploratory, a wide range of further research possibilities suggest themselves. I have already made mention of several of these. Many facets of this study, for example, need to be extended, a much larger population interviewed, and other forms of data collection used for better corroboration. This, however, is with reference to only one minority group--Hispanics. The same kind of

ethnographic study would be required for other minority-language groups in order to find both the differences and the similarities between various language groups in the configurations of uses for language which operate in their lives and how written language functions for them.

More specific suggestions can be made for each facet of my study. Much more research is needed for each of the domains I discussed earlier. The place of reading and writing in entertainment and in the use of the media by itself could provide important studies that could point to ideological influences in the lives of people in terms of their perceptions and experiences of the uses for literacy. The domain of religious life would also provide an important site for investigation into the parallels between uses for literacy in religious expression and other domains of life. A comparative approach to this issue, between various minority-language groups in Toronto, would be instructive if Heath is correct about this ideological importance of the religious context in uses for language.

The use of written language in the classroom domain has already received some attention. It is therefore an important domain to understand better, specifically in terms of how language (both written and oral) comes to be used in ESL classes and in other training program courses and how other non-language classroom practices and skills operate in formal learning settings. Similarly, studies of nonformal classroom ways of learning are needed, not only for literacy, but also for languages. Knowledge about group-specific practices and perceptions about how people learn social skills, job skills, religious skills, home life skills, and so forth, could also serve important educational ends.

The employment domain has also received considerable attention in the literature, but much more work is required in the analysis of job literacy and job English requirements of a wide variety of work situations, as opposed to the employment standards used to screen workers for those positions. There is also a need for information about the relationship of union participation to written language needs and uses, especially in issues of credentialling and representing the rights of non-literate workers.

Studies of bureaucratic language-use sites such as hospitals and clinics, and of professionals' offices, from doctors to school principals, from immigration agents to the clergy would reveal useful information about written language in public settings. Studies about the

place of legal offices in the lives of immigrants, and the legal uses of written language, would also provide important information about literacy in the lives of newcomers to Toronto.

Another entire area of studies is the strategies low-education and non-literate adults employ to manage the written language they encounter. One strategy in particular, the ways in which semi-literate to virtually non-literate adults gain meaning (or some use) from public print--what they come to recognize in public print, what they come to depend on, what they ignore, how they manage numbers, especially in terms of prices and the use of money, and so forth. Such knowledge would give important insights into what skills go into such activities in public, what alternatives people have for managing such domains, and people's feelings about them. The same would be useful of second language situations--in what ways non-English speaking adults gain information from an English setting, and factors which impede or obstruct such input in a given situation.

Another way to approach the investigation of strategies would be to observe which kinds of strategies lead individuals into new learning, such as asking a trusted helper what a symbol means, or a word they do not recognize, and then memorizing it in order to avoid having to ask again, or what kinds of limited print allow the individual to use their memories more effectively, and so forth. On the other hand, investigation of negative strategies, such as the one I observed of avoiding print situations, would provide specific information on obstacles to learning in the everyday lives of non-literates.

Research has been done on the uses and functions of literacy, especially at the societal level. More research is required on individual uses for literacy. I have already made reference to the need for investigations into the classroom, work, and religious uses of literacy. Investigations of letter writing conventions, of the uses of different kinds of media, and the kinds of information sought would also provide important information.

The one area which has received significant attention is the issue of the ideological nature of literacy. But many more examples from different sub-groups are necessary to provide the ethnographic base for a more solid conceptualization of the ways in which literacy can operate at individual, group, and society levels. And the ways in which the stigma of non-literacy operates in various societies and among various

minority groups may provide important information about difficulties individuals from various minority groups face in attempting to overcome the overlapping stigma of non-literacy in both their own culture, and in this culture, plus the added stigma of lack of English language proficiency.

One final area where more research is needed is the complicated issue of the relation between literacy skills and second language skills as they both operate in the various social settings encountered in Toronto, particularly in the difficult settings of the second language and job training classrooms and the domain of work. The way in which this issue of second language and literacy in entangled with ideological issues of schooling, credentialling, and language learning success make it a particularly complex phenomenon to analyze.

This thesis, then, has only begun to explore an area which requires much more study. The sociolinguistic approach, with its ethnographic methodology, requires much more extensive investigation of the complexity of multilingual language-use situations in which low-education minority-language adults live. The kinds of investigation which are needed include more detailed and corroborated descriptions of the written language practices in specific domains, analyses of the ideological dimension of the meanings shared by groups and societies, and of the economic, political, and pedagogical relationships which help structure these meanings. Such studies are essential if a better understanding of how literacy operates in the everyday lives of minority-language adults is to be achieved.

CONCLUSION

English proficiency, it is assumed, is the basic learning need of non-English speaking newcomers to Toronto. All other basic educational needs, from learning to manage everyday activities better in the city to getting job training, are assumed to rest primarily on this English learning need. Low-education minority-language adults, it is assumed, need reading and writing skills in English, to be provided by ESL programs. This study, however, suggests that such an approach is not in tune with the way written languages function in the everyday lives of low-education Hispanos. To ignore these roles which written languages play in everyday reality in favour of an English-only formal education approach is to pass up a range of important educational and non-educational alternatives which would better serve the everyday need

of low-education Hispanos. This is the primary argument of this study.

In order to gear adult basic education for minority groups to the ways in which written language is (and will be) used in people's everyday lives, it is necessary to establish how written language functions in their lives. These functions must be discovered, however, rather than prescribed, and an ethnography is the appropriate methodology for such a pursuit. As I have explained, however, because of the limitations in the objectives, time framework, and scale of the research, this study does not meet the requirements of a true ethnography. Rather, I used a partial ethnographic approach to begin to explore the field. My findings are therefore tentative, suggestive of the approach required to adequately evaluate the basic educational needs of minority-language adults. Much more detail is required to produce a more valid description of the functions of written language in the lives of low-education Hispanos in Toronto, and similar studies are required for other minority-language groups.

My findings, however, tentative though they may be, reveal a complex language-use reality in which both Spanish and English reading and writing take on sometimes distinct, sometimes overlapping, and sometimes interdependent roles which vary from domain to domain of Toronto daily life. The issue is not, therefore, mother-tongue literacy versus official language literacy in adult basic education, but rather the need for both languages according to the ways in which they operate in people's lives. These roles include not only the uses people have for reading and writing in Spanish and English, but also the strategies non- and semi-literate Hispanos use in order to interact with and use written language, and the ways in which literacy operates negatively in their lives through feelings of inadequacy, and the realities of stigma and exclusion. These functions also include not only written uses of language, but also oral uses of what is perceived to be standard and sub-standard Spanish and English.

The implications of these findings are both pedagogical and political. Pedagogically, the functions of Spanish and English written language provide important information not only about what is relevant to include in literacy curriculum for low-education Hispanos, but also about what kinds of learning strategies and situations may be more effective than formal language-learning classrooms have proven to be for accomplishing objectives set for low-education Hispano adults.

The political implications stem from two issues. On the one hand, people have strong sentimental as well as instrumental attachments to the languages they use and how they use them. This feature of language reveals the ideological dimension of the ways languages, including written languages, are used, valued, and perceived. Choices that are made about languages and literacy learning reflect specific sets of beliefs about language uses, educational objectives, and social changes. These together are political issues reflecting political dynamics of practices of exclusion and assimilation on the part of dominant groups, and accommodation and resistance on the part of minority groups.

Written and oral language use, particularly in multilingual settings, then, is not a merely technological matter of skills acquisition. The subjective dimension, or what I have been referring to as the ideological component, plays an essential part in not only how languages, oral and written, get used, but also in how they are learned. But it is not enough to simply recognize this ideological component in one's own stance and in the stances of other groups. There remains the challenge to reconcile the literacy and second language myths of both minority and mainstream cultures to language-use reality.

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Appendix A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE GENERAL INFORMATION

Name:
Home Country:
Length of time in Toronto:
Length of time away from home country:
How many years of schooling have you had?
Have you taken any classes since you came to Canada?
What did the classes teach?

BEFORE COMING TO CANADA

In how many different places did you live before coming to Canada?

How long did you live in each of those places? How big? Rural or urban?

When you were young were you and your brothers and sisters able to go to school? Who went and who didn't? Why? How many years?

Who among your friends, acquaintances, neighbors and relatives went to school and who didn't? Those who didn't go, why didn't they go?

Are there some of those who didn't go to school who now know how to read and write? Who? How did they learn?

Later, when you were an adult, who in your family, and who of your neighbors, friends, and acquaintances didn't know how to read and write? Why?

Everyday Places and Activities

First, we need to draw a map of where you went to regularly when you lived in (name of location). What other places did you go to occasionally which are not yet on the map? Did you travel to other places?

I would like to trace some of the everyday activities you would have been in the habit of doing in (name of place). To do this, we'll make up a schedule of what you think you probably would have been doing on a specific day in a specific month when you lived there. So try to imagine what you would have been doing on a typical (day of the week) in the month of () when you lived in (name of place). Starting with when you got up in the morning, describe what you would have done first on that day during that time of year. After that? Etc.

How would the schedule have to be changed for the other days of the week (day by day)? How would the weekends be different or the same?

How would the schedules change (in other months or times of the year)?

Reading in Everyday life

What was there to read in the (name of site). If anybody read something in the (name of site), what would they likely read? In which language was this reading material?

In the (name of the site) where else would you encounter written words or writing. What language(s) was it in?

Who would read this writing that you've told me about? To whom would they read it? When? Why would they read it? What importance did it have?

In the (name of site) did you need to have anything read for you? What? Who read it for you, or whom would you ask to read it for you?

What would you have read in the (name of site) if you had known how to read?
What kind of problems or difficulties would you encounter in the (name of site) because of not knowing how to read? How would you get around this difficulty?

You now have a good idea of what kind of information I'm looking for. Are there questions about the reading and writing in the (name of site) which I haven't thought of asking you?

Writing in Everyday Life

Now I'll ask the same questions about writing.

In the (name of site), was there anyone who did any kind of writing? Who? What did they write? In what language did they write?

Why did they write (kind of writing)? What importance did it have?

Did you need to have someone write anything for you in the (name of site)? What? Whom did you ask to write for you?

What other things would you have written in the (name of site) if you had been able to write?

READING AND WRITING IN CANADA

Everyday Places and Activities

Where have you lived in Canada since you came here?

Again we will draw a map of the places you see everyday and the places where you often go.

Are there other places you need to go to occasionally? Have you travelled to other places in Canada?

We need to make up the same kind of daily schedules we made for the other places you've lived. Let's start with today. What did you do this morning after you got up? After that? What do you plan to do during the rest of today?

How is this schedule different from the other days of the week (day by day)?
How is it the same? How are the weekends different?

How do these schedules change throughout the year (month by month)?

Reading in Everyday Life

What is there to read in the (name of site). What are people likely to read in the (name of site)? In what language is this material?

Where or on what do you notice other written words or sentences in the (name of site)? What language/s are they in?

Who reads this (kind of writing)? When? Why? Or, what importance does it have?

Do you need to have anything read for you in the (name of site)? What language does the (kind of writing) appear in? Who helps you read this (kind of writing), or whom do you ask for help?

What difficulties or problems do you encounter in the (name of site) because of not being able to read (in Spanish?) (in English)?

What else would you read in the (name of site) if you could read (in Spanish?) (in English)?

Writing in Everyday Life

Does anybody do any writing of any kind in the (name of site)? Who? What do they write? In what language? Why? or, what importance does it have?
Do you need to have somebody write anything for you in the (name of site)? What? In which language? Whom do you go to for help? or who writes for you?
When you are in the (name of site) what difficulties or problems do you run into because of not knowing how to write (in Spanish?) (in English?) How do you get around these difficulties?

What else would you write (name of site) if you could write (in Spanish?) (in English?)

Are there any other important questions I haven't thought of asking you about reading and writing you encounter in Toronto?

GENERAL OPINION QUESTIONS

What have you needed to learn in order to adapt to life in Toronto?

How is it necessary to change in order to adapt well to life here in Toronto?
What people or what resources are there to help you make these changes?

What problems will an hispano who has had little education face in Toronto?

How, or in what way, would this person solve these problems?